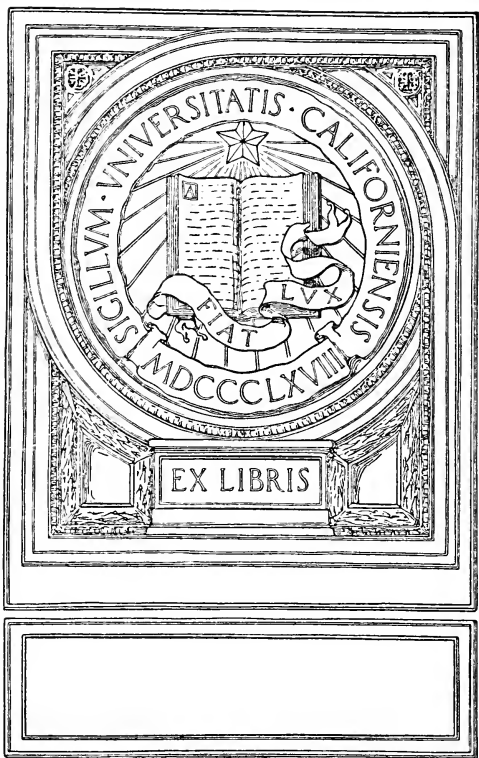


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SOME ACCOUNT
OF
ITINERATING LIBRARIES
AND THEIR
FOUNDER

We want public souls: we want them —BISHOP HACKETT



EDINBURGH. MDCCCLVI

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MRS ELIZABETH BROWN

MY DEAR MOTHER,

IF ANY PORTION OF THIS NARRATIVE PROVE
USEFUL, THAT PORTION I DEDICATE TO YOU. RECEIVE
IT WITH INDULGENCE, FOR IT IS THE GIFT OF YOUR
AFFECTIONATE SON,

SAMUEL BROWN.

CANAAN GROVE, MORNINGSID, EDINBURGH,

AUGUST 5TH, 1856.



PREFATORY NOTICE

THIS short Account was written seventeen years ago for the United Secession Magazine of that period. It was partly with the view of preserving some slight memorial of an uncommonly blameless and useful life, in the Literature of the Church within the pale of which it was led, that such a narrative was originally published. But it was partly also, and perhaps in the mind of the writer it was chiefly, with the purpose of drawing the attention of the Reader to the personal history of the Itinerating Libraries of East Lothian ; and that mainly in order to show how large an amount of public beneficence is within the reach of the most private situation in life.

This end the Sketch has certainly subserved pretty well. Since the decease of the Founder of those Libraries, numerous applications have been made to Mrs Brown, from year to year, for information concerning them, generally with a view to the Institution of the Plan elsewhere. The readiest answer to such inquiries has hitherto just been the sending of a copy of the description given in these pages; and in this way a considerable number of copies, thrown off separately at the time of publication, have been distributed far and wide. But the stock is now exhausted: and the object of this private Reprint (in so far as the Libraries are concerned) is simply and solely to provide the family of the Inventor with the means of replying to practical communications of the nature just mentioned, without having recourse to lengthy manuscript letters.

As this composition was the first piece of work I ever did for the press, I have thought it right to make not a few changes in point of style, omitting

some things, adding others, and even amplifying the outline very largely here and there throughout. Not content with this general enlargement and chastening of the production as it stood, I have almost changed the biographical part into a new work altogether. Although printed again only for the most private uses, therefore, it might well be called a Second Edition, with Notes and Emendations. Such as it is, it will serve its present professed purpose just as well as it used to do in its former shape, and it may possibly serve some other purposes better.

If the more discerning reader detect (as detect he will) the signs of a much enfeebled mind in the conduct of the Account, or in the literary treatment of the subject as a whole, or even in the unsteadiness of hand but too observable in many parts of the piece (short as it is), he is requested to understand that it has been written in the sick-room, during the intervals of a life of some suffering. These intervals, indeed, this con-

genial little labour of love has rendered still more lucid ; and that alone were reward enough for any patient in such circumstances, even were there no other. But I own to the enjoyment of a dearer recompense in the occasional hope, springing up within me while the thing went on taking shape under my hand from day to day, that something or other in these pages may yet prove useful, especially to the young. The private spectacle of so much solid good done by one hearty right-hand, and that in circumstances of manifold disadvantage, were surely enough to fire any generous mind with emulation ; and the generous will suffer me at least to indulge the wish (if not the hope) that those reflections and illustrations, with which I have tried to bring about the *callida junctura* or warm conjunction of the parts and particles of the narrative, may help the enlightenment of the less instructed. It is possible that (thanks to a Spirit above the writer) there may be a word in season fitted for even riper judgments and wiser

hearts — “For they breathe truth that breathe their words in pain.” At all events, the seed-basket is never out of place on the arm of even the feeblest foot that treads this unfruited world ; and one must just cast his own bread, such as it is, upon the waters. He may and, alas, he generally must go forth weeping ; but, so it be bearing the precious seed, he “shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”

S. B.





SOME ACCOUNT &c.

I.

SAMUEL BROWN was the eighth son of the Author of the SELF-INTERPRETING BIBLE, and was born at Haddington on the 30th of April, 1799. When little more than seven years of age he lost his venerable father, so that he enjoyed but few of the advantages of that learned and holy man's living precept and example. The only personal reminiscence he brought from the Old Manse (and this he carried with him through life as an early impression of peculiar sweetness and pungency) seems to have been the habit of sitting on the Commentator's knee of an evening, and having his head stroked, and being called My little Prophet. Indeed his older sister, the mother of John Brown Paterson the lamented young scholar,*

* Born at Alnwick Jan. 29, 1804; died at Edinburgh June 29, 1835, aged 31. After a school and college career of singular facility and brilliance, his Essay on the National Character of the

could scarcely add anything to this reminiscence beyond the memorable circumstance (to her) of having often sat upon the opposite knee, and listened with ever-fresh delight to the good man's singing of his favourite Latin song. It was Horace's famous *Aequam memento* :* — this the wittiest and the wisest, or at least the gayest and the sweetest, of Roman court-poets and worldlings, giving thus an evening voice to the peaceful feelings of the over-wearied Scotch Divine, when resting from his labours in the bosom of his family. It is really curious to think of the writer of those ponderous editions and Dictionaries of the Bible coming down stairs to tea from his study, where he had been closely engaged

Athenians, &c. having won the Commissioners' prize of 100 guineas in 1827, he was presented by Peel to the large parish of Falkirk in 1829 :—but he was gathered to his fathers before it was possible to have realised the splendid promise of his youth. See the Discourses of the late John B. Paterson, minister of Falkirk ; to which is prefixed a Memoir of his Life, and select literary and religious remains. Edin., Oliver and Boyd, 1837. What is wanted to consolidate his young fame is a new edition of his fine prize essay—for which he has left certain available materials.

* LIB. II. *Carmen* III. AD QUINTUM DELLIIUM. A kinsman of the Singer's (Dr John Brown the physician, his great-grandson in the line direct, being the oldest son of his oldest son's oldest son) says it is murder to do an ode by Q. Horatius Flaccus into English verse ; but here is a bit of it in rather literal prose : “ Remember to keep your mind easy in hard times, and restrain it from exultation in good fortune ; for, Dellius, you are sure to die, whether you live all your span in sorrow, or bless yourself

(from four or five in the morning*) perhaps inditing one of his own terrible dehortations, or else adding Scottish intensity to a dogma of John Calvin's,—and then chanting among his children so graceful an exhortation to equanimity in the season of affliction from the page of the gayest and wisest of ancient courtly moralists :—but such are some of the slender living threads, by which the far-stretching community of human life is maintained !

John Brown had himself been left an orphan, when only some ten years of age ; but he used to aver in his hyperbolical way that he had never missed his parents, for when father and mother had forsaken him the Lord had taken him up : and certainly, after a series of comfortable places as herd-boy and shepherd, followed by a short trial of the pedlar-life, he

with choice Falernian lying on secluded swards the live-long festive day. So where the tall pine and the white poplar love to interweave a hospitable shade with their boughs, and the running stream labours to tremble up the sloping bank, bid them carry wines and oils, and the too short-lived flowers of the pleasant rose, as long as your purse and your age and the atrocious thread of the Sisters Three permit," &c. &c. A jolly sweet song for the manse of a Scottish puritan and nonconformist, all of the olden time, is it not !

* *Memoirs and Select Remains of the Rev. John Brown, Minister of the Gospel, Haddington.* Edited by the Rev. W. Brown, M.D. : Edin., 1856. See this correct and excellent Memoir for this and other following references to points of fact concerning its subject.

passed without extraordinary impediment through the successive professional phases of Student of Divinity, Preacher of the Word, Minister of the Gospel, Professor of Divinity, and widely-reputed Author, all with credit to himself and some benefit to society at large. The worldly fortunes of this son of his were likewise favoured by providential circumstance. When his poor mother, a few years after his father's death, removed to Edinburgh in order to facilitate the college-education of her other sons, her brother John Croumbie, a man of uncommon piety and beneficence, took the boy to his house and treated him as his son till his own death in 1816. When the lad had become more than a middle-aged man, he made a quaint calculation in black and white, intending to show in how liberal a style Providence had dealt, in so far as regards pecuniary matters at least, with the younger family of the deceased Professor ! Knowing how his father had scrupulously devoted one-tenth of his annual income to charitable purposes from the date of his settlement, knowing exactly how long he lived in his charge, and knowing also with some accuracy the average of his little revenues during that period, it was easy enough to compute the sum dispensed in charity by him from first to last in the course of his Haddington life. But it so happened that, incidental to his connexion with the good

old burgh, the Divine had got him an excellent second wife in the person of Violet Croumbie, certain of whose relations duly left successive instalments of money and gear to her surviving children. Well, their testamentary substance did in all amount to a sum so considerable as to cover the ostensible and certain charity of the Manse twenty times over ; and thus, without ever a stroke of work or a drop of sweat on their parts, the children received 1900 *per cent* on what the open-handed sire had given away ! This is certainly but a mechanical mode of balancing accounts with the law of Compensation and the Law-giver. Yet it is written, “ He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord, and He will repay him.” Ordinarily the repayments of Heaven are in a nobler style than this ; and, indeed, that richer recompense was doubtless not omitted in this very instance. Our God completes His payments with nothing lower than Himself and His divine graces ; so that, in the very highest imaginable sense, as well as in the lowest, “ it is more blessed to give than to receive.” At the same time a man must live, although he cannot truly live by bread alone ; and it is a real human comfort to feel assured that the common wants of the liberal hand are peculiarly remembered by Him who “ careth for all the families of the earth.” “ I have been young and now am old,” com-

placently sings the Psalmist David, of whom it must be remembered that he was a man and a king of men, as well as a saint and a poet—"I have been young and now am old ; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." Ps. xxxvii. 25.

This self-constituted guardian of our little Prophet, John Croumbie namely, was an amiable, bountiful, singularly pious, and every way memorable Christian man ; as well as a rather ungainly, grim-visaged, over-scrupulous, nervous, and eccentric old bachelor. Haddington is redolent of his good name yet. He too had been orphaned in childhood, together with quite a troop of young brothers and sisters. They were the children, and he proved the last representative in kind,* of a family of what might be called Wholesale Pedlars. The Croumbies of Stenton had for generations supplied the travelling dealers of their day and district with their miscellaneous wares ;—a day of the minimum of centralisation, and a district co-extensive with the south of Scotland, and stretching down into the northern English counties. It was

* That is to say, of the same name and calling. Benjamin Croumbie, the miniature-painter, came of the same family:—born July 1803, died June 1847 ; the son of Andrew Croumbie, an Edinburgh solicitor, cousin-germane to this John. He painted the miniature from which the frontispiece has been engraved.

the business of people following their way of trade to stand between the manufacturer and merchant-proper, on the one hand, and those wandering waresmen of whom Wordsworth's moralising Pedlar is the poetical type, on the other. In fact, though they did not mount the pack themselves, these Croumbies regularly belonged to the Gild of Travelling Packmen. As locomotion and transportation became easier, the process of centralisation advanced, and small places such as Stenton lost the possibility of importance ; and the like of Mr Croumbie is found fairly settled in the county-town, under the style of what is still called a merchant in some parts of Scotland, a kind of tradesman now transformed into the complaisant shopkeeper. There were other Croumbies in the county, kindred with these, and moving in the same good middle walks of life. The original name was Abercrombie ; and it has been supposed that they were primarily brought to East Lothian in the persons of two puritan brothers of that surname, sentenced to the Bass Rock.

It appears that East Lothian was the great centre of this extinct chapman trade, to which these Abercrombies and Croumbies belonged, before its removal to Kent. The gild was large, far-travelled and rich. Their *rendezvous* was at the foot of the fine old Cross still extant at Preston Tower, the patrimonial relic

from which that much-lamented philosopher, the late Sir William Hamilton, Baronet, drew his title. There they met in general assembly, elected their king and his lords-depute (for such was the style), and ordered their common affairs. The Bannatyne Club rescued the Cross and its appendages from ruin some years ago, revived the Gild, made gentleman-chapmen (including Sir Walter Scott), chose kings, ate gild-dinners, and otherwise played themselves on the sacred spot after the manner of antiquarian Good-fellows. But it was right to save the Cross ; where anybody, descended like the present writer from the real gild-brethren, may go and see perhaps the very ink-bottle (cut there in the stone) in which some wandering forefather was wont to dip his pen. Haply one of my forbears was a king ! In the mean time, I stand in possession of a document containing a list of the lords-depute for Haddington and North Berwick and for Dunbar, from 1721 to '53 inclusive ; and my great-great-grandfather (and surely that's great enough) with his son Thomas after him are duly chronicled as at least nothing less than representative lords at this the Court of the Nomads. In 1725 the latter is written down as Lord Thomas Abercroumbie !

The most conspicuous feature in the secular cha-

racter of this last of the line in question was an unbending and even chivalrous integrity ; and the richest, or at least the rarest, quality of his Christian nature was his real and almost prodigal liberality in the cause of his Lord. So fine a soul could almost afford to be peculiar, to live in a rough-spun bodily presence, and to do without some of the congenial graces of manner and appearance. Then the world never knows aught of those inward experiences which sometimes modify the whole exterior of such a deep, still spirit as this inflexible, sternly and tenderly pious, and (to Christ) open-handed country merchant. To John Brown the Commentator, and to some few more that knew him by heart, he was both lovely and beloved in no common degree. Talking of experiences too, he had at least one of the most extraordinary kind to carry to the grave with him, enough to make most men nervous and strange for life. He sold gunpowder. The store was in a cellar right below his shop. One summer evening, as he sat at the shop-window over his ledger, an apprentice went below stairs candle in hand. A spark from the snuff did its work ; the barrel exploded ; the lad was killed ; the flooring and window above were blown up ; and John Croumbie was shot into the air and thrown up street the length of the old Tron, where he was let down safe and sound,—but

for the fall. This Tron, the public weighing-machine, was just half-way between his window and the Cross ;—a flight of some one-and-thirty yards. The shop doors being supposed to be shut for the night, the good man was doubtless projected by, and likewise safely carried within, the wind of the explosion, the terrible fragments going with him and around him, instead of dashing about him,—if not dashing him to bits, as they might have done but for his guardian angel, the Providence of God. It was, in any case, a solemn event. Its influence on his sombre and susceptible mind was deep and permanent. As long as he lived he religiously observed its anniversary. Regularly as the date came round, he shut himself within his bed-chamber the whole day long. Had he been a Purgatorian, as he might have been but for John Knox, the glory of Haddington,* it would have been lavished in costly masses for his poor boy. As it was, the day was spent in thanksgiving for the mercy of not having been hurried all too suddenly into the nearer and everlastingly fixed presence of Him who is “of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.” He over-scrupulously but per-

* Mr Croumbie was once on the point of buying the reputed birth-place of the Reformer, house and field, when Master Conscience (ever too masterful for him) stepped in and made him reserve the purchase-money for the more immediate service of their common Lord.

emptorily declined the amount for which he was insured, because he judged himself guilty of a breach of duty in having handed over the care of a cellar containing combustibles to an inexperienced youth, instead of having attended to it himself, seeing it had always been possible some such an accident might take place. The Company acknowledged this unheard-of delicacy of conscience by a presentation of plate.

II.

SUCH was the shy, reserved, and noble Christian enthusiast that took up the minister's young Samuel, like another sort of Eli, when his mother betook herself to Edinburgh with the rest of the family. Such was the very man to direct the boy how to answer the voice of the Lord, if the Lord should call ; for Uncle Croumbie was a natural-born priest, and there was something of the spirit of prophecy upon him too, uncereimonial and inarticulate as he was. But such was hardly the man to train the mind of a self-taught scholar's emulous and intelligent son, fresh from one of the most learned manses in Scotland, where knowledge had been duly held up as almost the only secular thing to be desired. This worthy Christian tutor seems accordingly to have undervalued the benefits of even an ordinary education at the Grammar School, for he withdrew the poor boy from some still humbler academy as soon as he got him fairly into his own hands, although he had barely completed his eleventh year ; and apprenticed him (at this early age) to his own trade, which had gradually become that of an ironmonger and

drysalter. The memory of his bookish father notwithstanding (a man who once made the honest and extravagant boast of having "hunted after all the lawful knowledges of the sons of men") the young ironmonger's instruction by means of systematic books was thus soon and sadly neglected. His only attainments at this time, of the school kind that is to say, consisted of the noble art of self-defence by reading, writing and figuring. Yet his mother Violet Croumbie, by the consenting accounts of all who remember her, was a superior and even a remarkable woman; clear-headed, critical, and acute in perception, at the same time that she was frugal, industrious, and a notable house-mother. In short, it is well known among her surviving connexions and relatives that, to a personal air and manners distinguished above her station in life, she added not only great economy and tireless industry, but also the charm of a stored and cultivated mind. She was especially voracious of books, a thing not to be commended perhaps; and literally read the libraries of the burgh dry after her return from the metropolis at this time. Knowing her husband's glorious early pursuit of instruction on the hill-side, and in those solitary places which his books had made glad, one fancies the old lady might perhaps have seen to a better provision being made for the intellectual

wants of the young layman she was leaving with her brother. To tell the truth however, the means and estate of education were wretchedly low at Haddington in those days, as I am painfully assured by a contemporary, who knew and remembers the fact to his proper cost ; and the more I inquire into the matter, the more I suspect that my father just got as good a school-education as was going :—reading, writing, and a few figures.

It is interesting to notice how differently situated the successive children of a single line may be in respect of elementary instruction. This boy's grandfather John Brown, the mahl-weaver of Kerpoo or Carpow,* could not read a word at the same age, if he could ever read properly at all. His father, voluminous author though he afterwards became, says of himself that he had "but a very few quarters at school, for reading, writing, and arithmetic ; one month of which, without their (his parents') allowance, I bestowed upon the Latin :"—one little month, poor fellow. On the other hand what scholastic attainments John Brown Paterson, our apprentice's nephew, had made by twelve years of age ! Yet after all, the grand distinction betwixt the educated and the uneducate lies in the acquirement by the former of the art and habit of easy reading, as has

* A hamlet near Abernethy in Perthshire, where the Commentator was born in 1722 :—he died at Haddington, June 19, 1787.

been asserted and illustrated with emphasis by an able contributor to the *North British Review*.* It is this easy-reading that opens to a youth the inner and proper World of Humanity, that poor but surpassingly interesting and profitable human commentary upon the Divine World of Nature and Life, now incarnate in printed books ; and in his own vernacular tongue, depend on it, there is more to be discovered than any man can master. The easy and ever-repeated reading of that sacred classic of the whole world the Bible, for instance, will make any capable person not only "wise unto salvation" (which is its proper purpose) but also lettered, cultivated, refined beyond "the guess of folly." And if there can be added in good time (and the timing of the thing is the great matter here) the universal secular classic of Christendom, the Drama of Shakespeare, or even the Poems of Milton, together with a sufficiency of what is called Useful Knowledge, why, half-a-dozen volumes may well build up a noble mind, if truly read.

It behoves the professional man to be largely studied in the things belonging to his intellectual and bookish craft, of course ; above all things the Scholar proper, the philosopher, must be vastly read : but for the man of common life, however high a place in life he may be called to, commend me to a few books, but these the

* *North British Review*, No. XLII., Hugh Miller of Cromarty—doubtless from the ably expository pen of Mr David Masson.

very best, and read again and again, indeed continually. Even Coleridge, a man of letters, a poet, a philosopher, has recorded how all that was best in his cultivation had been done by the few great books he had really read, marked, and inwardly digested, not by the multitudes he had devoured. John Dalton too used to boast how he could carry his whole library on his back ; and he would add, by way of emphasis, that he hadn't read it all yet. In short, apprentices of every kind (and the large majority of us are but apprentices, both in life and in knowledge, till the end of the chapter) should be given to understand once for all that desultory, widespread, unrepeated reading, especially in what are commonly called Periodicals (but better called Prodigals, on one occasion, by the unlettered mother of a voracious reader of that kind of Literature) is the bane of the last intellectual movement of society. Everybody reads far too much, and much too seldom. Voracity for trash, or for what is slight and effervescing, takes the place of an honest hunger for a sufficiency of the best. Social life is therefore losing in solidity of mind and character what it gains in information and show ; for, in Scotland at least, all this light and multifarious entertainment is but a sorry decline from the Bible-reading age. Even in the secular point of view, the habitual, ever-repeated contact of

the mind with the perfect literary forms contained in Holy Writ was once and long a noble discipline for the Scottish intellect, whether in peasant or in peer ; and the precious secular fruits of that truly classical culture are not yet exhausted, to make no mention whatever of the spiritual and everlasting functions of the Bible in the present connection.

Our youthful brother-apparent of the honourable Gild of Travelling Chapmen, however, had scarcely fallen on the days of either cheap literature or overmuch and unrepeatd reading. Besides, though both intelligent and eager to learn, his talents (such as they proved) were not of the Brunonian turn, which was decidedly literary or bent on the finding of knowledge through the medium of language and books, but took more after the Croumbies, whose bias was towards the instruction of the mind by things rather than words. In fact, the lad was more his "mother's bairn" than perhaps any of the rest of her children, while he certainly exhibited, on the other hand, not a little of his father's ardent and charitable temper. The Croumbies were of that outward and experimental tendency which, when it proves more intellectual, is prone to find at once its satisfaction and its culture in such studies as mechanics and chemistry. One of John Croumbie's

(two) brothers became an eminent manufacturing chemist at Glasgow. One of his sisters (Mrs Ramsay a Haddington dyer's wife) had three sons all addicted to Natural Science, and to Chemistry in particular. One of these became known in commerce, as belonging to the adventurous firm of Turnbull and Ramsay ; and distinguished himself by bringing the method of making vinegar by the destructive distillation of wood to perfection. The plan of neutralising the raw filthy product with lime, torrefying the crude salt, next neutralising with oil of vitriol, and then distilling the acetic acid, was of his invention. Andrew Ramsay, the present Professor of Geology at the Economical Museum, and now engaged in the great Geological Survey under Murchison, is one of his sons.

Such was also the unmistakable intellectual inclination of this son of Violet Croumbie's. All untrained as he was by bookish discipline, he began the learning of his business not without advantages under his maternal, one might almost say his motherly, old uncle's care. Fortunate in the enjoyment of more leisure than would likely have fallen to his lot under an ordinary master, he bestowed it on the cultivation of a strongish natural bias towards mechanical pursuits, with the companionship (and probably under the guidance) of his cousins the three Ramsays, whose

talents in that way have just been noticed. During those early years of self-tuition he rose early and sat late, they say, making crude experiments and reading such manuals as he could get. It seems that he made frequent visits to the most of the pieces of machinery to be found in the neighbourhood, in order to make sure that he understood their mechanism and appreciated the adaptation of their parts. In the second year of his apprenticeship indeed, among other models, he managed to get up an air-pump. The thing was perfect in its construction, and it would have worked to admiration ; but alack-a-day ! the basement, or floor under the bell, had been made of wood instead of brass. As a matter of course (though not of course to him, till that sorry day and thenceforward) the oak was quite too porous for the purpose, and treacherously baffled every attempt at exhaustion by the disappointed pump ! In the mean time, this was the simple and practical sort of education which his ardent and otherwise neglected mind found for itself. Doubtless, had he been born with the burden of inventive genius, this might have proved the best of schooling ; but even as it was, it was excellent discipline for an active young head without any pretension whatever to uncommon endowment : and just such a course of intellectual self-help were perhaps the best of schools and colleges for

apprentices of every kind and degree, whether in the great merchant's counting-house or upon the tailor's shop-board. This particular apprentice, I know, when advocating the cause of mechanics' and similar Institutions long afterwards, used to remark, with much fervour and gratitude of manner, that the experimental study of mechanical and chemical science (in his own humble way) had been the only mental training he had ever enjoyed. The Haddington School of Arts was the first in Scotland after the Institution of that in Edinburgh. It was founded by Mr Samuel Brown.* It flourished bravely at first, then languished a good many years, and then died utterly—I had almost said out of the very memory of the Town. “Ah,” said some one once to the valiant Great-heart of Scotland's modern Pilgrim's - Progress, “ah, if there were but a Chalmers in every Parish——!”

While always glad, however, to give his boyish gains and gettings in exchange for the gratification of intellectual desires naturally strong though not overbearing, yet even in those early years the dominant and really over-mastering principle of his character was uppermost ; and that was the Love of Man, as derived by congenial descent from the Love of God his express image in the heavens, and as

* See Chambers's *Gazetteer of Scotland*, Art. “Haddington.”

manifested in ever-ready acts of modest beneficence. He was what people call a philanthropist by nature, a born lover ;—a lover of good men certainly, but more characteristically just a lover of men. Had there never been such a divine and man-loving personage as Jesus the carpenter's apprentice of Nazareth, still this Haddington apprentice would have unfolded himself as being quite emphatically the friend of mankind, and become one of the helpers of humanity in his degree. At all events this passionate and exceeding goodwill to man was truly the key-note of his character and life, lowly and undistinguished as they were. This characteristic, in fact, which was really unique in its degree (in so far as I have yet learned to read the signs of character) lent nothing less than a certain humble glory to his whole manner of being. The feebleness of his vital stamina (of which more hereafter), his want of splendid gifts, and perhaps the absence of opportunity, confined his doings to a comparatively limited sphere, and hindered him from playing a shining part in the philanthropic annals of humanity, but still this great Love was the secret of all he was and did in the course of his pre-eminently useful life ; and it is fine to see it indicated so early in his career, provincial though this was. It was mainly a natural gift, coming to him by the grace of God in his birth and breeding ;—and, indeed, it showed itself

even in his cranial physiognomy, the regions of Benevolence and Veneration being beautifully full and oblong in their development.* But much was also owing beyond a doubt to the living, ever-present example of his devoted guardian and master, John Croumbie, who grudged nothing to Christ and Christ's poor, though he never attained to such enlightened views of practical charity as his ward. As for the latter, he seems to have begun like his uncle, if he ended like himself. It is affectionately and authentically recorded how he put the first golden guinea he ever amassed under an honest halfpenny-piece, and thought to have slipped it unnoticed upon the collection-plate at a missionary sermon. The timorous caution with which he only too hastily, and therefore hurriedly, put down his would-be-little contribution, attracted the notice of the elder in waiting, who pushed aside the copper mite and discovered the fine gold of Havilah :—" The boy is father to the man." Yet sometimes too, nay, often if not generally (let the over-anxious mother be thankful to remember) the Man is enabled to disown and throw off certain ill-favoured particulars and properties of the Boy in good time ; else what would become of the silly hearts of us parents when watch-

* This without pronouncing on Phrenology as a science of mental phenomena. When limited in its scope by the name of Cranial Physiognomy however, it is impossible to object to some of its many admirable observations.

ing the early indications of our children ! I know a man myself, the last to do such a thing now, who once upon a time, one hardly likes to think how long ago, had a silver sixpence to cast into the treasury on a similar occasion ; but he went away, and got it privily changed into a handful of copper pence, before dropping it on the brass plate ! But in such noisy days of printed subscription-lists as ours, the majority will perhaps admire this boy more than that.

III.

BUT boys are short-lived. Before you can calculate their ephemerides, they are young men. Adolescence comes upon them unawares, yet with imperious tread ; bringing new passions of the body, new longings of the heart, and new strange questionings of the soul in its train. Some natures are so feeble in vitality, and so shallow in character, that those things touch them but lightly ; others so coarse, that the bodily element alone is agitated ; some so dainty of sensation and affection, yet deficient in blood and spirit, as to experience nothing more than a sentimental revolution of the heart ; and others so pure, gentle, and high, that it is only by the new strange Doubt and Question that their up-grown spirits are put upon the rack. The last is especially the dowery that lies in wait for the attainment of their natural majority by certain noble women, who were only sprightly, critical and provoking perhaps, when minors ;—and also of a certain noble sort of young man, slenderer, gentler, purer, and often gayer than their stout companions. Fine ladies and gentlemen, be it remarked here however, (in case even two or three such useful persons should

happen to read these homely memorials of a homely young man) are ready to suppose that such poetic-looking things are to be said only of fine people, or, at the utmost, of the children of genius,—even if they do come from the mountain-side, the plough upon the lea, the weaver's shuttle, or the cobbler's stall. But God's thoughts are not as their thoughts : for we are all His offspring ; and He is not far from any one of us. We are all everlasting spirits, clothed in flesh and steeped in blood for yet a little while ; and all equally, seeing the Wonderful is our everlasting Father, and He is no respecter of persons. Not only the humblest lad that lives by the sweat of his brow, but also the homeliest in quality and circumstance, may (if not must) be met on the threshold of manhood by such giants of contradiction as have just been indicated above ; and he needs both the stout heart and the prayer of faith, to do them battle withal.

Remote by his very constitution and make from the temptations of sensuality, and neither passionate nor imaginative enough to suffer extravagantly from one of those bitter disappointments in love which so many folk experience in early life, it was the great endemic Controversy with God, or utter Perplexity concerning Religion, that shook the soul of our experimentalist at this time. I call it the great Endemic because, though by no means peculiar to

Scotland, it seems native and peculiarly prevalent there. Perhaps, indeed, grander and more historical instances have appeared in English life ; witness the memorable cases of Bunyan, Cromwell, Fox ; but very few Scotchmen, religiously brought up, escape it altogether. The struggle is of course proportionate to the depth and complication of the individual character engaged. Our present hero (and every man that fights this fight is called to be a hero now, were it only for this once in his endless life) was of a deep, still, earnest spirit, and the crisis in question was accordingly severe ; but the build of his whole intellectual and moral nature being simple, and composed of but a few healthy elements, it was never desperate. Yet it must be mentioned how, without deviating from the path of strict morality in which his faithful master had led him, or slighting any of the common observances of Scottish religion, he now actually did pass through a long duration of darkness and uncertainty. To use a sentence of his own upon the point, "In consequence, partly, of not having attended to the evidences of the truths of Christianity, my mind was thrown into much perplexity about almost all its doctrines."

What a change is this from his father's experience and that of his father's generation ! John Brown, the shepherd of the hills of Abernethy, struggling uncom-

panioned with the difficulties of Latin and Greek, and really hungering and thirsting after knowledge, wanted no such evidences ! The faith of Scotland in the old Doctrine was too universal and deep for the spirit of scepticism to have reached the like of him ; the very devils of society in those days believed and trembled ; and neither his more literary than philosophical bent, nor yet the nature of his early intellectual exercises, would lead him spontaneously in the direction of free-thinking and denial. The future Commentator wanted no evidences,—except of his own saving interest in the Sacrifice for Sin, described and defined with such exquisite and painful particularity in his country's Theology. In fact, the new Criticism does not seem to have ever truly reached and stirred him. His life seems rather to have been one long personal conflict. “ In short,” he writes to an old friend when himself some fifty years of age,—“ my life is and has been a kind of almost perpetual strife between God and my soul. He strives to overcome my enmity and wickedness with His mercies, and I strive to overcome His mercy with my enmity and wickedness.”* Even on his death-bed he exclaims, “ Oh ! I think I could love to stand in the most public place in heaven, having all the redeemed pointing to me as the greatest sinner that ever was saved.”† All his

* See Memoir, &c., p. 69.

† *Ib.*, &c., p. 129.

life through, indeed, his poor heart is occupied with self-upbraidings so bitter, self-loathings (one had almost said self-cursings) so harrowing, damnatory, and really appalling that one can scarcely believe them sincere, without supposing the wretch had "eaten of the insane root," and become touched with madness. But it was not so. John Brown of Had-dington and the large school, or rather church-seg-ment, of holy men of old in Scotland, whom he may be considered as representing here in contradistinction to his son and the new order of things, were not mad, most noble Festus! Let any man of conscience, possessed of the necessary Scottish fervour, nay, per-fervour of character, construct for his incessant con-templation an image of the Beauty of Holiness out of the matchless elements to be found by the eye of perfect reverence in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments; let him realise that image as once and for ever alive and embodied in the Person of Jesus, not only for his prostrate adoration, but for his ceaseless imitation; let his penitent heart, his broken and contrite spirit, be perpetually insinuating and insisting within him, Behold what manner of man I ought to be:—and then let him (morning, noon, evening, and even during the watches of the night when only this very Jesus is near) turn to the reality of his own mode of Being, and feel its beggarly con-

trast with this Divine Ideal ! Let him do all this ; and, if he be a man of anything like the depth of nature these older Scotchmen were of, he will understand their sad and sorrowful mood, and he will share their shame and confusion of face, perhaps even their cruel self-reviling—unless his better taste withhold him from speech and keep him dumb.

If the reader cannot do all this as it is here set down, however, and it is not easy nowadays, he can at least conceive of it as done (if he have sufficient conceptive talent), and, in that case, at least the logical coherence of our forefathers will be amply vindicated to his mind. Living all their days under so truly sublime a sense of sin (or shortcoming of that glory of God to which mankind are called, for such and no meaner was their idea of man's transgression of the Divine law), and likewise penetrated to the quick by a sense of the marvellous love of God in the scheme devised from unborn eternity to win them back to that obedience which makes man free and all but divine again, there is surely no logical wonder (if so bold a phrase may be permitted me for once) that these men should have been continually exercised in self-examination and consequently in self-abasement ; —for who indeed is sufficient for these things ? That they indulged in such cruel talk, in the way of self-crimination and

self-disgust, was the literary fault of an age and a school fervent in passion and fancy, but deficient in imagination and taste : and it was contagious ; going down to Elders of the Kirk, who could scarcely read the Bible they adored. It is recorded that John Brown derived the greatest benefit in early youth from a venerable elder, who kept his sheep in the same walks, but could not read : the boy reading, the untaught Presbyterian communicating his experience and insight :—

“Old experience doth attain
Somewhat of prophetic strain.”

After these cursory remarks, it will be more intelligible, even to the youngest and therein most remote reader of this narrative, how the father differed from the son in the kind of religious perplexity that waylaid them in their opening manhood. Between eighteen and nineteen the herd of Abernethy hears a sermon (and sermons played a much more vital part in the life of the Church then than now), which “pierced his conscience as if almost every sentence had been directed to none but” him : it was on the words “There are some of you that believe not ;” and it actually made him conclude himself one of the greatest unbelievers in the world. “This sermon,” says he, many a long year after, “threw

my soul into no small agony and concern, and made me look on all my former experiences as nothing but common operations of the spirit.”* The agony here, poor broken spirit, is all about experiences; the doubt is about inward operations, whether common and therefore bootless for salvation, or specific and therefore converting the soul. On the other hand his fatherless son, the growing apprentice, has been reading books rather than running after sermons, though he heard plenty of them too; and his reading has not been confined to the Bible and a few of its ultra-evangelical expounders, nor his private studies directed to the learned tongues as the keys of the ministry. He had been conversing in the most intimate communion with young self-taught fellow-students of natural things, and reading books of Mechanics, Chemistry, and Natural Science in general;—a half of knowledge which is dangerously overfreighted with materialising conclusions, when unbalanced by the other hemisphere. The study of Nature is liberal and bracing, and intended to set free the mind from many an ignominious bond; but when only half-mastered, and that without a wise guide through its mazes, it has its own sinister inclination. It is especially apt to accustom the student to bring to the bar of its Method of Inquiry things

* Memoir, &c., p. 12.

that are not amenable to such a judicature, and questions not competent before such a court. To this pass it clearly brought our self-teaching Reader, at an age when his father had been gravelled by painful personal distinctions betwixt the common and the specific operations of the Holy Ghost. This is the momentous and often fatal crisis to which many a young man (and woman too perhaps) in more or less similar circumstances, is frequently conducted nowadays by the crude and yet unmethodised plans of popular tuition, now so prevalent in the land. To such it could hardly fail to be interesting, and it might well be useful, to know how another popular-scientific Doubter felt and acted at the same stage of the great Inquest : but the means of making a satisfactory analysis of the movement are not extant in this instance, simply because the Subject was not much of a writer in early life, and never attained to even the poorest mastery in the art at any time. Happily, however, he has left a fragmentary notice or two, from which his mode of procedure may be inferred. Not to mingle any strictures of another mind upon that mode with the original impression, the prayerful and long process by which he was at length extricated from the toils of the enemy had better be shown in a few extracts from his own short manuscript, threaded on a slender string of purely practical

and explanatory remark. The critical reader had better be reminded, however, that an intellectual process may and often (in this queer world) does conduct the mind to the desired result, without being logically valid. It is frequently something else than the visible chain of reasoning that, quite unconsciously to the reasoner himself, makes out the completed proof ; and that simply by supplementing the visible links of the argument :—And now for the extracts without one word of commentary.

“ In the midst of my perplexity,” he writes, “ it appeared rational to suppose that God could easily suggest a train of thought which would enable me to see plainly what was dark and inexplicable,—and I often prayed that He would.” Here the belief and hearty reception of Deity as a personal God, and therefore to be approached as practically his God, is humbly clung to. He had not been dislodged from that central position as many are, who, whenever they feebly doubt some of the merely outside or circumferential truths of religion, audaciously fly off at a tangent from the centre of repose itself. Were such as are in the latter condition, or are likely to be thrown into it, to emulate the docility of spirit with which this questioner opened on the inquiry, they would be more likely to arrive at the same happy conclusion. “ A year or

two before that, when on a visit to Edinburgh, I had met with ‘Scott’s Force of Truth.’ I procured a copy. I was satisfied that his mode of searching out the truth was honest and rational. I tried to follow his example, and for about two years almost my whole reading and serious reflection were on the evidences of natural and revealed religion. ‘Paley’s Natural Theology’ and ‘Campbell on Miracles’ were of especial use to me. ‘Butler’s Analogy’ did much to satisfy me with the limited views of God’s spiritual economy which we can at present obtain. My mind gradually became more settled.” He was not satisfied, however, with all this reading and pondering ; but, following the natural tendency which his private studies had confirmed, endeavoured to make undeniable observations of his own, and to draw the proper inferences for himself. “There was one consideration which impressed my mind. I knew several persons who, I saw, firmly believed the depravity of human nature ; who depended on Christ for the divine favour, and the Holy Spirit for a change of heart and ability to keep God’s commandments :—I saw these men honestly and habitually striving to please God. On the other hand, I did not know (nor have since known) any of contrary sentiments who appeared, in a serious and permanent manner, to study to please God in the same way,—especially in

governing the dispositions of their minds. Here was the evidence of experiment; not of one, but of experiments made by a greater number of individuals than any in natural philosophy; experiments which proved that Jesus died to save *His* followers *from* their sins." Nor did the anxious investigation stop here; but on these and such data he reasoned regarding himself,—a step which too many either shrink from or neglect, even after having candidly examined the evidences of Christianity, and having been satisfied about them too. Hence about this time he is found to have written,—“I can thus see that a believing view of the love of God in the plan of salvation is sufficient to constrain men to abhor every evil and constantly study to please Him ‘who so loved us;’ but I cannot excite these feelings of myself; ‘when I would do good, evil is present with me;’ therefore I seek a divine influence.” He did not seek in vain; but, some time after, he was able to add these blessed and most comfortable words,—“I hope some change has been made, though not all I wish,—but the hope of that change being perfected, the prospect of being yet enabled to love God with all my heart, and of spending hereafter an eternity in examining His works and ways, contemplating His excellences, and enjoying His approbation, are the most delightful anticipations that can enter my mind as to myself.”

Arrived by this process of honest, if summary inquisition, so near an abiding personal faith in the Gospel of Christ as conceived and stated in the spirit of a moderate Calvinism, he went on a visit to his brother, Ebenezer Brown of Inverkeithing, a famous preacher in his day, and nowhere forgotten in Scotland yet. It was a communion time ; and they shared the society of their ministerial brothers, John of Whitburn and Dr Thomas of Dalkeith, as well as of some of the neighbouring ministers who had gone to assist in the services of the sacrament. The subject of his misgivings was now the all-concerning question—whether or not he himself possessed the marks of a genuine Christian. He enjoyed much of the elevating society of the good men just alluded to during his short stay ; and soon learned to draw the comfort he needed from the happy consciousness, that “ By this we know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren ;”—an assurance of saintship which never left him, and on the dawning of which at this memorable season he looked back to the last with unmingled delight. A brother Baptist once wound up an enthusiastic magnification of their tenets in the ear of John Bunyan (of all men !) by declaring that Adult baptism is the very badge of Christianity : “ Nay,” said the Dreamer, “ this is the

badge of Christianity, Behold these Christians, how they love one another."* There certainly is vastly more benevolence and mutual goodwill in Christianised than in Mahometan and Heathen countries ; and at all events, such family affection is the characteristic feature of the Church in those lands just in proportion to its greater degree of purity ; or rather its lesser degree of impurity, for positive purity in any degree is still far to seek. But leaving countries and churches out of the question, it is this secret family love that the most surely betokens the advent of the Spirit of Christ in His true disciples, few and scattered as they are : and it is ever a delicious moment when the convert feels the holy flame begin to glow within him ;—a doubly delicious moment, not only for the divine melting of the heart in itself, but also for the soft assurance it brings. In that dewy hour of summer prime, the first young summer of the soul, he can lift his eyes to the East, where God the Son of Man was born, and whisper,—I too am a Christian ! Doubtless the rapture is not as sweet, and altogether memorable, in one neophyte as in another ; and this interesting novice was by no means addicted to rapturous emotions of any sort. It was not his nature, which was still : but he was all the more capable of a

* See Phillips' *Life of Bunyan*.

certain self-possest, silent joy. And it was thus, faintly as the process has just been traced, that he had found what he had sought with humility, anxiety, and diligence, even that nameless peace “ which passeth all understanding.” He lost little time in making the public profession of his faith, hope, and charity : and he never wavered in his convictions ; though many things were duly changed within him, by the progress of thought and experience. One thing never changed, and will never change now :—“ By this we know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.” He joined the congregation of his father, then under the ministry of Mr Black.*

* Ordained Aug. 19, 1789 ; died June 16, 1828. Mr Brown and he were as steadfast friends as they were near neighbours those nine-and-thirty years :—their families are now united by marriage.

IV.

CASTING the eye over this slight sketch of the manner in which the Paradise of lost Belief was in this instance regained, one cannot but be struck by two points in the movement. The first is his having recourse, after or along with all this studying of the merely external and consequently presumptive Evidences in the current books, to the experimental or observational method of common sense and common science. It is at once his instinct and his habit. As the bird takes to the air, the fish to the deep sea, the beast of prey to the secret jungle, and the peaceful herd to the open plain in the hour of peril or apprehension, so he looks abroad and makes his observations on the living men around him, now that it behoves him to test the power of principles. Unfortunately for the plan, few are surrounded by such Christian men as composed the social circle far and near of rare old John Croumbie ; and, thank God, many of us cannot deny that some of the most precious "fruits of the Spirit" are borne by characters by no means Christian, if Christians must "firmly believe the depravity of human nature, depend on Christ for the

divine favour," and so forth. Why, this very day when (by way of experiment) offering this very argument to an ingenuous mind, I was met at once by an answer nearly the reverse of our young disciple's:—"Well, but the loud-professing Christians of my circle have been bitter disappointments for the most part, and three at least of the best people I have ever known are called Unbelievers." The assertion could ill be gainsaid in this instance; and for my part, I would not for the world rest my plea for Christ on anything so frail.

The other point that seems worthy of notice, in the Extracts given above, is the weighty *Italic* stress laid upon the conclusion that "Jesus died to save *His* followers *from* their sins." It was not the function, it was not the mission (as they say now), in plain and simple phrase it was not the business of this Teacher only to explain a beautiful code of virtue like Socrates, or unfold a sublime body of divinity like Plato, for example. It was not even to deliver men from the punishment of that load of iniquity under which they groaned; and knew they groaned, when awakened by the Gospel of repentance in the wilderness. All that and more indeed it was, and all that He divinely accomplished too; but His mighty and peculiar burden was to deliver from sin itself, to save men from themselves, to set them free from the bondage

of the Evil Will, to make them holy as He is holy, and to give them rest. It is this Rest that the Nations always want, this that the solitary single heart is for ever yearning to find : Rest in the consciousness of renewed participation in the Divine Nature ; Rest in re-affiliation to God, in brotherhood to Christ the first-begotten Son of the Highest, in communion with the Comfortress the still-descending mother dove of Peace ;—for these are but the forms under which the mystery of Adoption is expressed (as well as words can do it) in the Book of Rest. Such rest as this, even feebly realised, were surely nothing less than Heaven itself begun on this poor Earth. Realised again, as it once was realised in Jewry for our ensample, and as it may have been realised many times more than once when the world knew it not, it were Heaven in no figure of speech, real as Eternity and eternal as the Godhead. “In Cicero and Plato,” says St Augustine (as cited by Coleridge from Leighton) “and other such writers I meet with many things acutely said, and things that excite a certain warmth of emotion, but in none of them do I find these words, Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” *

* Apud Ciceronem et Platonem, aliosque ejusmodi scriptores, multa sunt acute dicta, et leniter calentia, sed in iis omnibus hoc non invenio, Venite ad me, &c. [Matt. xii. 28.] — *Aids to Reflection*, p. 34, 2d ed.

V.

To return to the subject of this sketch, his religious character having thus been formed, he began to associate more intimately with some of his acquaintances at Haddington, especially one William Hunter a baker, who till his own death in 1836 continued his faithful friend, adviser, and abettor in almost all his subsequent undertakings. He now vigorously entered on the performance of some of the relative duties of Christianity. Among other things, he commenced the work of Sabbath-school teaching. His natural facility in the communication of instruction, combined with the earnest simplicity of his address, made him a favourite with the pupils, and his classes were crowded. Some years after, he fitted up a school-room on his own premises, and was there surrounded every Sunday evening by sixty or eighty boys. This pleasant task he weekly plied for many years, till he was forced by the state of his health to give it up. He enjoyed considerable encouragement in the after-lives of several of his scholars; of some who remained at home in credit, and of others who wrote to him from abroad with gratitude. Although he was forced

to resign his occupations as a teacher, however, he continued to take a lively interest in the success of others, and drew up a Set of Hints as the result of his own experience, of which the following brief extracts may possibly be useful to some such as are engaged in the same service :—

“ In order to interest all the scholars in the attendance, let the number and value of the quarterly premiums given to each class be in direct proportion to the number of scholars it may contain.”

“ Make the monitors inform when they know of any of the scholars lying, cheating, cursing, swearing, playing on the Sabbath, disobeying their parents, or playing with wicked children ; and take an opportunity of warning them against such practices ; also request their parents to make known their faults.”

. . . . “ Often bring forward practical religion, especially as exemplified in the lives of David, Paul, and others ; and give as enlarged views of the laws of God, particularly of the first table, as possible. This will prepare them both for seeing their need of a Saviour, and making the account of His work and offices plain ; and also may be the means of preventing them from many sins of ignorance. Show the justice and benevolence of those laws.”

But it must also be mentioned here that his humble studies in Natural Science were by no means

abandoned for the pious offices of the Sunday-school and such works of charity. Science and piety went hand in hand on this lowly and sequestered path of life. He devoted a good deal of his spare time to Chemistry about this period; and this is again alluded to here, as particularly suitable to these days of Schools of Arts and People's Colleges, inasmuch as Mr Brown afterwards came to derive much of his income from the practical application of the scanty principles he had mastered in his youth and early manhood. He never, indeed, pursued this fine and profound science otherwise than in a superficial and practical way, having not even attempted to keep pace with its brilliant progress after the Davian epoch of its career under the Idea of Lavoisier; and the Daltonian Chemistry was almost unknown, until it was expounded to him towards the close of his life by one whom he had imbued with the love of science. During the Highland famine in 1836, however, he was the means of calling the attention of the Scottish Society of Arts to the application of the gummy matter of the sea-wares to the purposes of food and commerce. The Society's committee characterised his suggestions as "of the highest importance," accorded them a vote of thanks, printed them, and offered a medal to any practical person who should carry them out with success. Nothing has come

of it, perhaps because the necessity passed away ; —but the attempt was good, and the thought ingenious.

And what kind of a person was this notable young country-merchant, to look at and to speak to, all this time ? It is hard to say, in the absence of anything like a portrait or a written sketch, and in the absence also of survivors that knew him then-and-days, and are now possessed of a sufficiently true and graphic tongue or pen. Nobody thought of treasuring memorials of so obscure, though beloved a personage, I dare say :—but yet one can gather a few hints from tradition ! Well, of the full middle-size of this country, standing five feet nine, slender but wiry and firm, dark and dark-grey-eyed yet ruddy, marred by a very slight obliquity of vision, moderately pitted by the small-pox, and altogether neither ill-made nor ill-favoured, he had no pretensions to manly beauty ; but he must always have looked, and at this time did look manly, frank, intelligent, cheery, and especially benign. Dressed in garments partly made by his mother, long vest and loose small-clothes innocent of a tailor's touch, with ribbed grey-worsted hosen and country shoon, this somewhat characteristic figure is said to have been the observed of some observers as a genuine Rustic, when he would

walk to Edinburgh of an afternoon ;—especially in one large family of girls, the most sedate of whom was the predestinate wife of the plainly appalled, but fresh and benign young Calvinist. As for his manners they were not polished of course, but they were cheery and even gay ; and his natural benignity could not but shine through his deportment, when once rendered transparent by the glow of easy intercourse. In fact, he was addicted on the whole to laughter and merriment before his marriage, or rather until an alarming and protracted illness, which overwhelmed him for life very soon after that auspicious event ; while he really never lost the power of following cheerily in the wake of social glee, and that more particularly in the way of hearty laughter. He probably never raised a laugh in his life, but he certainly never failed to join in an honest one. Laughter seemed the only outlet and expression he had for what other men get out of themselves in the practical joke, the odd gesture, the verbal play, the comic sketch, or in some more intellectual sportive movement. Not a touch of drollery, not a stroke of wit, not a glance of humour ever came from lip or eye of his. He could not even tell an anecdote with point. Then there was nothing laughable about himself, so that he might have been only too neutral in the social circle, but for this power of laughing right heartily at the fun of

others. His friend William Hunter, though a man of singular gravity of demeanour the live-long Sabbath-day, and at all those times (were it but for a sudden passing minute or two) in which the Sabbath-chord of his heart was struck or even breathed upon from far, was a genuine natural wag; and it was surely one of the final causes of his existence to furnish John Croumbie, our experimental Drysalter, and their sportless circle with food for laughter, when Solomon's time to laugh was come. Then his favourite brother-in-law Thomas Littlejohn (a man every whit as famous in his day and way as the chef d'œuvrier of Lernè himself, for whom see the page of Rabélais, *abeuntibus puerisque puellis*) was absolutely a second Yorick, were there no third!—and that unrivalled social humourist (for he was nothing less) was wont just to drench the spirit of his grave philanthropic kinsman in the gay and sportive element of comedy, when they met. The grave kinsman could not contribute so much as a syllable or even a jot to the glee; but he could at least laugh better than most people: and these gay communions must have been very good for them both, blessings on the twin-memory of Yorick and his witless friend!

Although the latter, however, was “neither witty himself nor the cause that wit was in other men,” as being the express opposite of Sir John Falstaff in

everything but “babbling o’ green fields” towards the close (and well did Shakespeare know how “one touch of Nature makes the whole World kin”)—he could not hinder witty things happening to his proper person, and to the properties of other people. Some few years before the latest point this narrative has brought him to, while yet in his teens somewhere, he was intimate with one Forrest, who afterwards distinguished himself in the East Indian army;—at least one fancies so, for those colonels are all distinguished and gallant officers. They walked together early of a morning. A string used to be tied to the apprentice his foot, and let over the window into the street. It was his bell-pull, and the future colonel rung him up. The house was next door to the George, the window just over the stance of the mail, and the mail drove off just as often before Forrest’s appearance under the window as after it. One morning David was late, and his Jonathan lay unrung. The mail was all right, the leaders were eager to be off, crack went the long whip, and away they pranced:—but more ruthless than Forrest himself, Jehu had caught the bell-pull in his whip-lash, the bell was not only pulled but dragged, up sprang the boy, landed like a Tyne-trout at the window-chink in a trice, and—and what? why, and there an end; for how the adventure was wound up, and the lash wound

off, my deponent saith not. I tell the tale as 'twas told to me :—*honi soit qui mal y pense !*

It was while he was still a young man that the Haddington Tract Society, which was the second in Scotland, was formed by his circle of friends. (Everything in Haddington used to be the second in Scotland in those days.) They made him their Depositary, the honorary duties of whose office he diligently performed through all the varying fortunes of the institution till his death, nearly forty years after. For many years, in fact, he had the sole management and responsibility on himself. The plan he followed seems to be worthy of imitation, as it is certainly one of the most economical at present in use. He procured a regular supply of the London Society's tracts, and every quarter sent to subscribers of four shillings annually shilling-packets at the London cost-price. The subscribers gave them away in their turn as they chose ; and thus tracts were distributed in East Lothian at less expense than in the metropolis whence they issued. The number of tracts circulated in the county, through this Depositary's instrumentality, must have been immense ; especially including those given to the Highland and Irish reapers, who annually resort to East Lothian.

VI.

AFTER having been two years in copartnership with his friend and second father Mr Croumbie, he was married on the 5th of August in 1806, in the course of his twenty-eighth year, just a jubilee ago. His bride was Elizabeth, one of seven long-surviving daughters of the late Henry Duncan of Comely Gardens; but seeing she survives him in honoured widowhood (and it is the cordial wish of all her descendants that she may survive him many a good year to come) it will not do to say more than this, namely, that she proved in all things an excellent wife. It is not easy to be the right sort of mate for a Projector; witness the trials of Madame Palissy the Potter's wife, as they are cunningly set forth by Lady Willoughby in her charming book.* And a projector this wife soon enough found her husband to be; in a small way, among chemical pots and pans; and on the larger scale, in connection with that plan

* *The Provocations of Madame Palissy*: written, it is to be presumed, in defence of the much-tried woman from the charges of impatience, trustlessness, and obstruction insinuated against her by Mr Morley in his Biography of Bernard Palissy, the heroic experimentalist.

of Itinerating Libraries, the invention and establishment of which are associated with his name : but she stood the test with credit. She did not thwart him in his countless chemical and mechanical devices for the improvement of their own or somebody else's comforts or conditions ; and she certainly helped him truly in the proper work of his Life, the Library scheme, with her sympathies and prayers. Her father was a man of much active benevolence ; but in more of a private way, among the closes and wynds of old Edinburgh, where he had his regular beats, having been a man of duty, order, and manifold practical energy, rather than of impulse and effusion. He was a cloth-maker, literally like his father the Deacon before him ; and one of the very last of the old trade. Deacon Duncan had mixed himself up with the burgh-politics of the city, having sat several years in the town-council during the days of nominal election ; but his son, having seceded from the Kirk, kept him to himself and to his really extensive round of duties in the way of religious charity, especially in connection with the Destitute Sick Society and other organs of beneficence. One consequence of this, perhaps, was his ability to retire from business comparatively early in life ; when he left Warriston's Close and the purlieus of the High Street, and bought Comely Gardens, which had been a sort of petty Vauxhall (the house

and park) for the entertainment of the lieges by means of tea-and-toddy, oyster-ploys, dances, exhibitions—and what not.* Of the young wife's mother, one Rachel Anderson, it is not out of place just to notice the fact, in passing, that she was a woman of rare self-assertion and strength of character. Come of an old line of good south-country farmer-people, and counting among her forbears one of "the notable women of Ettrick," mentioned with unction and honour by the voluminous Thomas Boston of holy memory, circumstances had taken her early to Edinburgh. Without mentioning the details of her life there, which were certainly somewhat remarkable for a person so private (such as her hearty communion with the Friends of the People, and her personal friendship for Gerrald and Palmer), suffice it that she gave her daughter her share of those stout inheritances of head and heart, of which the lot of the latter was soon to stand in need at Haddington.

For this auspicious union was not long of being overclouded, and that more or less for the whole of a

* A brother of his had a small property on the Water of Leith (did it come from *Lethus*?—*Lethi corripuit gradum*) where he planted an ample garden, calling it Spring Gardens, for the love he bore his wife Isabella Spring. This country retreat is now built up in Stockbridge, and is a crowded part of Edinburgh; but the locality duly bears the printed name of Spring Gardens to this day.

pretty long lifetime. Within two little months, her husband was seized in the gripe of pleuro-pneumony, a rapid inflammatory disease of the chest, which soon dragged him to the brink of the grave. Thrown five long months on bed by this malady, he continued all that time in such a state of prostration as seemed to render it impossible he should ever recover. Conscious of his own condition, and facing the prospects of his pitiable young partner in this sudden calamity, he surrendered himself to the will of God without the infirmity of a doubt. He was unable from very weakness, of course, to offer her any consolation. One day however, in allusion to their affliction, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and quite audibly said, "Even so, Father, for so it hath seemed good in thy sight." Ah, these too summary puttings asunder by death of those whom God hath joined are terrible things, especially in such touching circumstances. They need the spirit of faith, and also the heart of hope, to bear them with anything like the fortitude and serenity to which the Christian is summoned by his profession; but, the victory of true resignation and consent once fairly won, the compensation may well be unspeakable. "*Thy will be done* is better than even health," wrote a friend to his miserable correspondent once:—how much better then than life!

But it is the health, the life of another, and that other the Beloved, that is the point of agony :—God help the sufferer that watches and survives.

Their relatives and connexions naturally looked on his pitiful case as being beyond all hope. So did his medical adviser and (though standing in the very opposite point of the compass in matters of belief) very good friend Mr Welsh, a really able and eminent surgeon. In welcome disappointment of their apprehensions, however, he suddenly began to revive after a long period of comparative insensibility. The famous Dr Gregory saw him once in his extremity ; and having ascertained that his kindred had not been in the way of dying by chest-diseases (but fevers), pronounced with much decision that he would get well, though only after a long process of recovery. His progress was in fact so gradual as to be hardly perceptible, and he lived on in exceeding weakness for more than a year after these first five months of alarming illness. During this weary convalescence the faith and patience of the Christian were painfully, if triumphantly exercised. On one hand, he dreaded the thought of being thrown a burden upon others ; and on the other, he did really long to be about his “ Father’s business,” to borrow the phrase of the Boy-Christ with reverence :—and such feelings are worse to endure than pain and weariness, when the mood is

at its height. It is in these long dreary convalescences, and in chronic disease, that a man's more secret powers are tried ; and that precisely in conflict with such subtle demi-devils as vexed this sufferer on his early sick-bed, the dread of dependence, the sense of uselessness, coming in the guise of angels.

“ Doing or suffering, to be weak is to be miserable : ”—

it is the *suspirium de profundis*, or deep-heaved groan of the fallen Morning-Star ; and such is every man in conscience, when Sin is translated into Sorrow in his proper body and soul ; and even when repentance brings remission of Sin (but brings no remission of the Misery) it is hard to change the key and incontinently sing—

“ They also serve, who only stand and wait.”

It was during this long confinement to the house that he began to sympathise, in a more particular and practical manner, with such as are confined in punishment for their crimes ;—himself a criminal, and himself confined. “ But for the grace of God,” said Wesley once when he saw a murderer led out to execution, “ but for the grace of God there goes John Wesley.” Haddington being then a military station, there were generally a number of prisoners in the county jail.

These he frequently visited after his recovery, providing such as could read with suitable books, and inducing some of them to teach their neighbours who could not. This practice he resumed many long years after, when he became provost of the burgh, having catechised and instructed in the jail every other Sabbath in alternation with his life-long friend, the late Bailie Hunter, till the beginning of his last illness. They had good reason to believe that their prison-labours were not fruitless, having received many expressions of gratitude from prisoners themselves, both in person and by letter. This weekly visit was for some time after his decease continued to be made by an active friend of Mr Brown's, an elder of the name of Rae, well remembered yet for his patience and good works. The necessity or desirableness of such visits was then finally superseded by the regular appointment of Dr Cook, the senior minister of the parish, to the chaplaincy of the county jail.

This visitation of the prison-house was not the only good thing that was educed in the providence of God from this early adversity : for not only did he return, with greater alacrity and devotion, to the doing of every relative Christian duty on the performance of which he had already entered, but it was during this protracted recovery that he formed the first conception of the scheme of Itinerating Libraries. As the

development and institution of that ingenious plan for the diffusion of useful and religious knowledge among the people has made him well known in Scotland and elsewhere, a succinct sketch of its origin and progress must now be given. He did not in any degree attempt to put the plan which was then devised into execution till 1817.

VII.

IT was his first design merely to put the same advantages, as the towns derived from the institution of subscription and burgh libraries, within the reach of the villages and rural districts of the county. To the furtherance of this object he resolved to devote "a number of balances of militia insurance," which "notwithstanding of various advertisements and letters sent to the parties to whom they belonged," had not been required of him as the successor, in the agency of the company, of Mr John Croumbie, who had died the year before.

With a part of these balances he procured two hundred select volumes, "about two-thirds of which were of a moral and religious tendency, while the remainder comprised books of travels, agriculture, the mechanical arts, and popular sciences." With a view to effect the most sparing economy, and at the same time secure the greatest possible amount of benefit in the disposal of these, he divided them into four assorted sets of fifty volumes each. These he stationed respectively in the villages of Aberlady, Salton, Tynninghame, and Garvald, under the superintendence of gratuitous librarians, accompanied by the

intimation that each of them should be removed at the end of two years, and its place supplied by one of the other three successively. He meant in this way to supply those villages, for eight years, with all the advantages of four standing libraries of two hundred volumes each, *at one-fourth of the expense of four such libraries*. But he found that he really effected something more : for, whereas the fixed subscription-libraries of towns are generally well read during the first years of their institution, and then gradually decline until they are comparatively useless, the certainty of their removal after two years combined with the novelty of the fresh arrivals at the biennial terms to keep alive the interest of the population in the itinerating books. In this way the invaluable habit of reading was not only developed, but fostered and kept alive. Accordingly during 1817-19, the total issues of the two hundred volumes were, for the first year, 1461 ; for the second, 733 ; and, during 1819-20 (after the first exchange) for the first year, 1313, for the second, 928 ; there having been a very marked falling-off in the second years of the terms, but none in the sum total of the books taken out during the second term, as compared with the whole number taken out during the first term of two years ;—a result which the experience of subsequent years almost uniformly confirmed.

The returns of these two first biennial terms at once increased his expectations and enlarged the scope of his design. It was evident, at first sight, that in the directly inverse proportion of the number of exchanging stations would be the comparative economy of the device. If four stations could be furnished by it with more than the advantages of a standing library, at one-fourth of the expense of four such standing libraries, for eight years ; then eight stations could be supplied with 400 volumes, at one-eighth of the proportional expense for sixteen years ; sixteen with 800 volumes, at one-sixteenth, for thirty-two years ; and so forth to any extent.

Moreover, taking thirty-two years as the average reading term of human life, sixteen villages having such a provision made for them could, at this easy rate, enjoy the privilege of a constant standing library of 800 volumes ; inasmuch as, before the circulation of thirty-two years should be performed, an entirely new reading population should have arisen ; and the revolution of the simple mechanism would never need to stop. Now supposing the villages of a county were divided into five sections of sixteen each, with its centre of egress and return, these sections might make mutual exchanges to any desirable extent ; and an intestinal movement might thus be kept up, which would furnish the equivalent benefits

of a standing library of 4000 volumes, at every point of the county, at one-eightieth of the ordinary expense, with all the additional advantages, not easily calculable, of sustained novelty and motion. What may be said of a county may of course, and only with greater force, be affirmed of a country ; and indeed the Projector laboured at his task, ever after he first seriously entered on it, under the influence of the brilliant hope that his plan might actually become one of the agents of the ultimate illumination of the world,—a hope in which, it will be found, he was encouraged by some of the greatest and best men of the age. It was a devout imagination, did the desired illumination depend on books ; but perhaps the effective value of mere books has been overrated in the present age of the world. Yet they are mighty things in their own place and in their own way ; and this plan, for sending them in the state of perpetual motion over the face of the earth, was a devout and a noble thought.

Such was the scheme in 1823, after the result of his first and limited experiment. He now set himself to discover how it might be worked out in its details, how the first expenditure might be defrayed, how its wastes might be compensated, and how the whole machinery might be maintained in action. He soon perceived that, on the one hand, only united societies

(or a government) could accomplish his design on an extended scale ; and, on the other, that he could lay no claim to the assistance of either the one or the other, till he should have demonstrated its practicability. He therefore made the attempt in his native county with unremitting diligence, and in spite of the discouragements he met with in many quarters. It is strange (and hardly to be believed) that no sooner does a less unloving man take it into his heart to try and do some good thing for the world, or even for his parish, than people do what they can to dishearten and thwart him ; but the fact stares us in the face, with all the certainty and universality of one of the so-called laws of nature ; and the secret history of the Itinerating Libraries of East Lothian offers no exception to the rule. Many a time was the iron made to enter the soul of their projector, although he was no mere system-builder, but put his hand to the work like a man. Feeble in health, far from rich, his hands full enough of an extensive and complicated business (one would have thought), he toiled and yearned over this work of love from month to month, from week to week, all the rest of his delicate and interrupted life. Kind friends he found in the matter too ; but he also found apathy, misunderstanding, enmity. Even William Hunter never went cordially with him in this undertaking.

It were needless to detail the particulars of his arduous progress ; for the introduction of the mechanism into any other countryside (or some city perhaps) will always imply peculiar new circumstances, to be met by specific contrivances. Suffice it then to say that by 1836, after twenty years of well-sustained devotion to his enterprise, and by dint of much personal sacrifice of time, strength, money and heart, he had set forty-seven libraries in circulatory motion through the county, containing 2380 volumes, exclusive of about 500 new books, which had not then been thrown into the general circulation. At his death there were 3850 volumes ; and if there had been sixty divisions or book-cases, instead of only forty-seven, no inhabitant would have been one mile and a-half from one. This was something considerable for an agricultural shire.

The funds, with which these exertions were made, were raised partly by the contributions of some who approved of the plan, and were willing to aid in giving it a fair trial, and partly by small donations from several missionary and other societies in the county, the United Agricultural among the rest. The greater part of his resources, however, was derived from the following contrivance of his own :—The newly-purchased books were kept two years in the towns (Haddington, North Berwick, Dunbar) for the use of

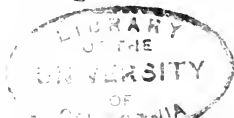
annual subscribers of five shillings, before they were merged in the general circulation ; and by these subscriptions a great part of the expenditure of the gratuitous circulation has been heretofore defrayed. This plan might well be tried elsewhere ; for the subscribers have the double gratification of contributing to a praiseworthy object and, at the same time, enjoying the benefit of a select and progressive, though small supply of the most recent publications. Indeed Mr Brown believed, from his own experience, that the regular expenditure of a national institution, were it once set a-going, could be completely met by this contrivance. At all events, plans must everywhere be devised and put in motion, if at all possible, for the self-supporting of the village or parish libraries. Here it will be some such a device as this, there it will be the direct charging of petty fees, and elsewhere it will be something else.

Such is the plan of Itinerating Libraries ; and such the laborious but successful endeavours which were made by the author to prove its practicability, even in the disadvantageous circumstances of a first and a single-handed attempt.

As to the first principle of movable libraries, I believe it may be gathered from Oberlin's Memoirs, that he had fallen on the plan of shifting the scanty

book-shelves of the scattered villages of his charge among the Alps, as early as the origin of the East Lothian libraries. The general idea of carrying about the means of instruction had certainly been embodied, in 1730, by Griffith Jones, in the Circulating Schools of Wales ; and, long after, in the General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland's similar institutions in the Highlands and Islands. Nevertheless, and independently of the claims to originality which might be put forward on behalf of our convalescent Haddington inventor, the spirit of Paley's maxim, "that he alone discovers who proves," is equally applicable to the history of inventions and discoveries ; for certainly he alone invents to any purpose, who satisfies the world that the means he may have devised have been found competent to the end proposed. Accordingly, as it was by having for twenty years supplied them with well-chosen reading, that he had gained the esteem of the people of East Lothian, so it is because, at the expense of so much heart and toil, he has provided a direct and easily-apprehended proof of what might otherwise have been deemed a mere speculation; that this Inventor deserves the approbation of his country. But sooth to say, these poor questions about priority of invention grow impertinent at times. It is surely too bad to disturb the very manes or memories of giants like Newton and Leibnitz, Lavoisier and Watt,

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and now of such simple and unambitious souls as Oberlin and Samuel Brown, with questions so vexatious. An English Company offered a premium some years ago for the invention of a check-gate adapted to a particular railway purpose, the necessity of which had arisen out of certain local emergencies. The best specification and model were those of William Martin, the member of a family sadly (though also greatly) known to the public for its share of the burden, the danger, and the doom of genius. It did not suit the respectability of this Company to award their money to a personage of William's reputation ; and therefore they took his gateway plans, but gave the prize to another. Spencer Hall condoled with him one day by the road-side ; and that sincerely, asking why the Company had not been prosecuted. Such a measure had never been seriously entertained, it seemed. The want of money and reputation had proved a fatal want. " But what of that," exclaimed Martin as he went on his way brandishing his staff, " what of that ! I know whose gates they are in the kingdom of heaven—I know." Better men (to speak conventionally) might perhaps take a lesson from this their more unhappy brother.

Nor has the East Lothian experiment been disregarded either at home or abroad. The correspondence which Mr Brown carried on with societies

and private individuals, far and near, was very large. Lord Brougham, Mr Douglas of Cavers, his brother Dr William Brown, and many other friends of popular education elsewhere than in East Lothian, strengthened him mightily by their applause. His brother wrote a lucid Pamphlet on the Institution, which was translated into French and German, and duly published at Paris and Berlin ; while extracts from it were permitted to appear in the *Journal de St Petersburg*. The Christian patriot and philosopher of Cavers has recorded his opinion of the Plan in a note to the able Tract entitled *The Prospects of Great Britain*. “Among all the various openings for liberality,” he writes, “none appears more satisfactory than the plan of itinerating libraries ; at all events, it must sooner or later be generally adopted.” Lord Brougham, whose noble exertions in the cause of knowledge and its diffusion will ever constitute one of his most sterling claims upon the memory and homage of his country as one of her veritable noblemen, not only made lengthened and minute inquiries by letter on the subject, and expressed himself highly satisfied with the inventor’s explanations, but actually advised (if not urged) him to abandon his other avocations and give himself entirely to this undertaking. His Lordship likewise brought the project before the public in an essay

entitled *Practical Observations upon the Education of the People, &c.*, which soon ran through nine editions. "An excellent plan," says the author of this useful pamphlet, "was about ten years ago adopted by Mr Samuel Brown, of Haddington, for instructing the towns and villages of the county of East Lothian, in succession, by means of the same books." After a summary description of the device and its results, the sagacious writer, "nothing if not critical," adds this very suggestive sentence: "This plan is now adopted in Berwickshire, by Mr Buchan of Kelloe, with this very great improvement, that the current expenses are defrayed by the readers, who pay twopence a-month, and I hope choose the books."—A hope which were all the stronger, of course, in a narrator who finishes so pleasant a paragraph with the characteristic remark that it "is peculiarly gratifying to observe that the original scheme, from which the whole has followed, was merely a library for *religious tracts*"—The sentiment in italics being merely a pendicle of Brougham's large private property in that kind! All peculiar gratification notwithstanding however (and this specimen reminds one only of the jubilation of some minor Exeter Hall over the conversion of some Jew-broker's pawn-shop into a Pantechnicon, conducted on the principles of the true Political

Economy, as resuscitated by Adam Smith, and put in force by Moses and son)—all such peculiar gratification notwithstanding, I say, there can be no doubt but our great schoolmaster is right in this matter. These libraries must be relieved of their eleemosynary character wherever and whenever it is possible. To do their best they must be free ; to be free they must be supported by those who use them ; and those who buy the books will choose them. At the same time the Plan, as a plan, is available under many forms ; and, amongst other things, it offers itself as a splendid means of private beneficence. What a boon for some great Patron, lord-lieutenant, county duke, or knight of the shire, to confer upon a neighbourhood, a countryside, or a county ! The inventor himself, though no patron or patron's lieutenant of any kind, but just a country merchant of the sort that has been described above somewhere, bestowed it on the broad and bonny acres of his dear East Lothian. To how many in every county might it not be said without either irrelevance or impertinence, "Go thou and do likewise !" In short, the attention of the reading world has been frequently drawn to the subject, and that by some of the leading friends of adult education, through the instrumentality of the periodical press. Among those friendly, though fugitive abettings of the cause on the part of the jour-

nalist, may be noticed a generous article from the practised pen of Dr Smiles, a Haddingtonian by birth, in *Howitts' Journal*, vol. i. 1847. The same hand, if I am not mistaken, introduced the subject to the readers of *Eliza Cook's Weekly*. Mr Hole, the able and zealous author of a Prize Essay on Literary, Scientific, and Mechanics' Institutions, took the opportunity of its publication to call the attention of his readers in the Appendix of his work to the evidence of John Croumbie Brown (in the *Parliamentary Report on Public Libraries*, p. 111) concerning the itinerating libraries of Scotland, Mr Brown being the oldest son of the East Lothian manager, and familiar with the details of the movement in that county from its very beginning.

Nor have all these appreciations and hearty recommendations of the scheme by philanthropists and men of letters been without their effect. The manager's own printed reports of his successive experience were so plain-dealing, and also so business-like and successful, that they convinced many minds of the practicability of the thing. About 1822 the plan was introduced into Berwickshire under the auspices of George Buchan of Kelloe, Esquire; but auspices can't do much for either man or plan, beyond the mere money they may be able to bestow, or have the

fascination to draw. In 1826 a Society was formed in Edinburgh, the members of which, in the terms of the resolutions they passed at their meetings, expressed a sufficient sense of the importance of the institution they had combined to support. Things promised well at the outset ; but there was the fatal want of working men, and the consequence has been that the Mid-Lothian attempt has proved a complete failure. In 1829, after Mr Douglas had corresponded with the originator, libraries were set a-going in Roxburghshire, where they amounted to the number of twenty-six in 1839. In 1828 the Committee of the General Assembly had fifty-six libraries circulating, in biennial terms, among their Highland schools. The Hibernian School and the London Religious Tract Societies have, for several years, adopted an imitation of the East Lothian plan ; and in the printed reports, their committees characterise it as “ seemingly most admirable.” The germs of the device have likewise been carried to several other parts of Scotland, England, and Ireland ; as well as to Jamaica, Canada, South Africa, and Russia ; while in 1837, Sir John Franklin was attempting to introduce it into Van Diemen’s Land. The more philanthropic reader is referred to the Appendix for certain gratifying notices anent the introduction of two sets of circumambulatory

Village Libraries into Yorkshire under the especial auspices of Lord Carlisle and Mr Hole ;—as well as for some other things connected with the Plan of Itineration, which might only render the text less interesting to those who read this slender piece of biography more for the man than for his books.

The system of Itinerating Libraries has been thoroughly brought into action, however, nowhere but in East Lothian as yet. Money, necessary as it is, is not enough for the working of such machinery as this—unless, indeed, money were forthcoming in such plenty as to organise a staff of competent paid officials. As it is, every centre of local circulation must have its manager as industrious, and imbued with the same spirit of devotion and love, as the unwearied founder ; else the whole movements of egress, return, and exchange will be confused, retarded, and inefficient. Now Mr Brown had the enthusiasm of an inventor, and the hope of the future appreciation of his invention, to sustain him, while he expended more time and toil on the elaboration of his favourite scheme than it is perhaps possible that any one else can bestow. It may reasonably be feared that qualified volunteer managers of this stamp will never be found in every county of Scotland. It was to be feared, in fact, that even the East Lothian combina-

tion might have quite stagnated on the removal of its originator from the scene of his labours. It has not done so altogether, thanks to the filial industry of his elder daughter. But I venture to think that such a task is too public and complicated for a single-handed woman, as it had assuredly proved itself too laborious for a delicately organised man.

But the grand consideration now is this:—The institution itself, tested and warranted by experience sufficiently ample, is now left with a Christian public. It is for them to decide whether it is to remain amongst the organs of utility and honour which are their country's pride, or to disappear after having struggled into existence through obstacles which are now removed. Be it clearly understood, however, that it is only by the foundation of large and liberal associations over the land that the proposed end can be gained. These societies must originate, either with such of the community as are willing to employ a simple and effective engine for the mental elevation of their less favoured countrymen ; or, which is probably the more hopeful anticipation, with such of the latter themselves as may have the discernment to appreciate the means by which they may acquire for themselves, and confer on their neighbours, the largest amount of educational benefit at the smallest expense of money and trouble. Whatever be the

issue of these suggestions, it may, in conclusion and by way of example, be stated, that the American Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge early resolved to incorporate the plan of Itinerating Libraries with their other operations. Mr Abbot, the secretary of that great national association, closes a letter on the subject, written some eighteen years ago, with these words—"I have much hope of one day seeing that system, in all its substantial advantages, generally adopted over the millions of miles of our national territory." I do not know what has been done there for the system of Itineration of late years ; but is America thus to take another of our inventions, and anticipate us in its application ?

In the mean time there is no denying that it has nothing like a history to offer in this country since the death of the East Lothian founder. The idea has made no substantial progress, although many an experiment of it on the smaller scale has been instituted by beneficent hands here and there, both at home and in the colonies. In these days of competitive egotism if not selfishness, and of governmental infirmity, the only hope for the realisation of this (as of many an other) gentle thought lies in the future co-operative energy of the men that are to read ;—and one does not know beforehand to what class of society this definition and that necessity will not then

apply, for the social distribution of mere money will be strangely changed. That the better working class of the present time, such as the skilled artisan, is capable of appreciating the beauty and economy of the Itinerating System, is not to be doubted. Individuals among them in East Lothian felt it deeply ; but what can individuals do, until the mass be stirred ! This very day, a master-builder was with me. He had raised himself from the ranks, as they say. I found he had worked journeyman a good many years in Haddingtonshire ; had known Mr Brown well in the way of business, but thought of him chiefly (it was clear) as the book-provider of the county. At Tynninghame, Salton, elsewhere, he had duly read the books as they came ; “all the books,” was his phrase. “Well,” said I, “it is curious you should mention this, for I have been writing an account of those tramping Libraries this very afternoon.” “Ah,” rejoined the former journeyman, “too much can neither be said nor written about them.”

VIII.

To return once more to the subject of memoir : After he had become fairly established in business, and begun to be surrounded by an increasing family, his course was long unvaried, except by the ordinary vicissitudes of life. Of these he had his share ;—having been several times reduced to the last extremity by sharp rheumatic fevers ; having buried relatives, friends, infants, like other men ; and having encountered disappointments, perplexities, contradictions, and the other trials incident to the condition of humanity, both in the private walk of life and in the sphere of public labour. Habitually making these things the burdens of secret prayer, he willingly bowed himself to them all as being (known by faith to be) the necessary items of an effectual education for the everlasting life ; and seldom allowed them to disturb his equanimity, or to infringe on the discharge of whatever appeared to be the duty that lay nearest him. Accordingly, while he laboured to the last at his Itinerating Libraries, he did not neglect the other opportunities of usefulness which came in his way, but took both a deep interest and an active part in

the doings of all the beneficent societies that centred in Haddington ;—and there were more then than now.

In 1829, he lent his aid to the formation of the East Lothian Bible Society, was appointed depositary, and continued in the office till 1834. The East Lothian Society for the Propagation of Christianity was constituted a few years after the Bible Society, and he was all his life a zealous director. Mr Hunter had long the principal management of its transactions, but after his death in 1836 they devolved on his friend ; who, within two weeks of his own decease, drew up and directed the publication of the last report. He likewise made unwearied exertions in behalf of Slavery-abolition and Slave-emancipation in the town and county, calling public meetings, getting up petitions, and circulating information, as opportunity afforded. He was also instrumental in the origination of the Haddington School of Arts, over which he presided several years. Like many so-called Schools of the same kind, it soon fell into inanition, and ended in death beginning at the brain.

It may be proper to notice too that, while always ready for every more public work of sacred and secular goodwill within his reach, he was by no means negligent of the duties that attached to him (for example) as a private member and manager of his late father's

congregation. The function of the managerial board in a dissenting Presbyterian congregation is simply the care of its secular affairs. In his managerial capacity, then, he did all he could to promote the comfort of his father's successors, and to animate the rest of the board with the same liberality of spirit ; while he emulously followed "such things as make for peace," in all the temporalities of the Church.

He was more than once chosen to the eldership, but never accepted the election. Although deeply conscious of the solemn responsibility of the duties of that sacred office, he shrank from neither that responsibility nor the labours of the office in refusing to comply with the repeated call of his brethren. He refused because he could not comply with a good conscience. When first elected, he proceeded to examine the Confession and Formula with care, as every elder-elect must do if he would be faithful to God, the church, and himself. The results of this scrutiny are given in the following curt extracts of letters addressed to the Session :—"It is not in my power to answer in the affirmative to the questions of the Formula, without there being added such a qualifying clause as—'with such exceptions as I have notified to the session.'" "In some parts of the Formula there are expressions in which I cannot acquiesce." "There is no reason to suppose that the Apostles, when they

ordained elders, required uniformity of sentiment in such a multitude of particulars.” “So far as I have gone in examining the Confession, Catechisms, and Form of Government, I very much admire (with a few exceptions), the perspicuous, judicious, and modest language of the compilers ; but I am sorry I cannot extend the same remarks to our Formula. My views of church government by Sessions, Presbyteries, and Synods are that that system is exceedingly wise and rational, and that it is not contradicted by the Scriptures ; and that presbyteries and synods receive some countenance from the example of the Apostles : but I am not prepared to use the strong language of the Third Question.” That is, he was not prepared to declare his solemn belief that “the Presbyterian Form of Church Government is the only form delivered and appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ in His word, to continue unalterable to the end of the world,” any more than to promise “never directly or indirectly to endeavour the prejudice or subversion of it, but to maintain, support, and defend it in his station all the days of his life.”

These scruples are recorded now, not to “endeavour the prejudice or subversion” of the formulas of the United or any other Presbyterian church ; but merely as an illustration of the possibility of its insisting on non-essentials to its own prejudice, and the exclusion

from its eldership of men who, by the very tenderness of conscience which compels them to decline acceptance of the office, are qualified to do it honour. It has in justice to be added here, one cannot but be pleased to think, that the United Secession Church relaxed the stringency and self-assertion of their formularies not many years after our non-conformist's congregational protest ; and certainly the whole tendency of the counsels of that United Presbyterian body, which has come of its union with the Relievers, is towards more liberal constructions.

All this about repeated calls received to the eldership (when they did not call such young men to that venerable office as they do now) will be reminding the reader that the little Prophet of the Old Manse, the constructor of the air-pump with a wooden floor, the manly though ever-ailing projector, and the successful experimentalist of the Itinerating Libraries, is no longer young ; and, truth to tell, he was old before his time, owing to weakly health, ceaseless working, and a consuming kind of spirit. He had been born at the seventh month to begin with, unfortunate on the very threshold of life ; and although he appeared (to the unscientific eye of friends and lovers) to have surmounted it quite, the fact did certainly tell on him through life. Parents and friends

continually do mistake the seeming vigours of the athletic-strumous temperament (ruddy complexion, plumpness, mere muscular strength, resistance to ordinary morbid causes) for the signs of true health. But manhood comes, some great disease invades, and the unfortunate is laid low—if not in death, yet usually for life. This is the lot of thousands ; and none know the miseries and the temptations of the delicate man but himself. It was the lot of him whose Life is now engaging our attention for a little. He never truly recovered from the deadly shock of that first great illness immediately after his marriage. He enjoyed life dearly, indeed ; and, blessed be the God of compensation, a large proportion of his peculiar enjoyments (and they were peculiar, as well as deep-drawn) arose out of the very circumstance of his broken body : but independently of sundry attacks of rheumatic fever (enough for any one life), the vestiges of his chest-disease attended him all the rest of his “few and evil days”—or rather, as it has been finely put, “evil and few,” evil and therefore happily few. He was always more or less a sufferer, were it only from habitual cough and sputa. Yet his children and their numerous cousins (all of whom, strange to say, were ever welcome to him) remember him as the most placid and kindly of fathers and uncles. His benevolence, reverence, and aptitude to teach

made him fond of the young and them of him. He was always teaching them ; in the workshop, in the nursery, at table, in the garden, wheresoever and whensoever he was with them. Even when he had to punish, he did all he could to teach them. One of his nephews, who had more occasion perhaps than any other to be under his roof, remembers having once been caught in the fact of some high misdemeanour, in company with one of the children of the house. The offence demanded the utmost rigour of law, and off they were walked to a private place for punishment. Having prayed aloud over them (as was his wont) the poor father thrashed his own boy in the orthodox fashion of the day, happily not yet altogether obsolete ; and then explained to the other criminal, how he dared not flog him because he was not his son, but taking one of the lad's hands he smote it slightly by way of sign and seal. " Ah," says the wayward boy now grown a sorrowful middle-aged man, " that symbolical castigation was certainly the most painful, and probably the most profitable I ever received." One can well believe it :—but the uncle of this affectionate nephew was no flogger ; only too prone, on the contrary, to trust the efficacy of prayers and admonitions ; and the bared extremity of punishment was reserved for the capital crimes and nameless enormities of boyhood.

As for his external appearance after the birth of the library scheme in '17, he had laid aside the ordinary dress of a layman of his day and condition long before the period I can recollect him from. And it was high time, one may readily conjecture : for Mrs Brown happened to be at the seaside when his last coloured coat and metal buttons came home ; and away walked the absentee to church, as it seems, the three or four back-buttons still duly wrapped in paper. He now dressed habitually in a black broad-brim, white neckerchief, and blacks with gaiters ; his black grey-growing hair having been duly turned and frizzed every morning after breakfast : and the industrious townsman really looked more like a somewhat formal minister than either a manager or a provost, especially when from home. It is curious, almost contradictory to think of so altogether simple a being, as attired with even so slight an approach to formality as this. He had been married in top-boots, small clothes, shining vest, and one knows not what manner of head-piece ! The parson-style was better than that, because more in keeping ; inasmuch as, though absolutely devoid of the professional clerical spirit, it was impossible to separate the idea of religion from the man. So inwoven was it with his character by birth, habit, and conviction,

that it was his second nature to a rare degree ; and all who knew him well had read at least one living epistle in their day. To love him was a lesson in piety.

Nor could he ever himself learn to separate between religion and active life. The interior wish of his heart was to effect religious good by his ever-moving book-cases. It was by their instrumentality that he hoped to do his (main) share of the preaching work of Christianity, and at least turn some to righteousness ; and his brother John of Whitburn* used to aver that, though not a minister, he had done as much good in the world as any of them. There can be no doubt, it appears, that the libraries were occasionally very useful in this way ; although it is

* In his day kindly known in Scotland within and beyond the bounds of his denomination, but to be better known now (at least by name) as the father of John Brown, D.D., the learned Professor of Exegetical Theology in the United Presbyterian Church, whose jubilee in the ministry was lately celebrated at Edinburgh. The kindly old man was among the last, if not the last of Scottish preachers occasionally to chant his sermons, and especially his communion-services, to a lilt in the minor key, full of pathos and unction. The relations of this intoning or chant to the religious sentiment on one hand, and to cant on the other, were matter of much scientific interest, if rightly gone into. The tendency to it is co-extensive with that sentiment, and proportionate to its depth according to some law. The devout soul certainly falls a-singing when deeply enough moved, and that how unmusical soever its bodily organisation may be : but this is no place for such a discussion. But O the auld Scottish sermon and communion chant was sweet ; and the new generations can never understand its power.

in the secular education of the people that the plan is most likely to be of great service, for they must be supported by the people, and the people must choose their own books. There was one instance of their spiritual utility, which may be recorded without irrelevancy, though it is quite out of the sphere of an institution for the working-classes. Robert Vetch of Caponflat, Esquire, whose modest squirearchy marches with the burgh, had lived a gay and miscellaneous life, broken in upon by fitful moods of sentimental thoughtfulness. The time came rather prematurely when he could neither hunt nor make merry, and among other things he took to reading from the paying division of the itinerants, described above as stationed two preliminary years at Haddington to help in getting up funds. He trusted the manager a good deal to choose his books for him ; and the old gentleman always traced an entire change of view and feeling, in regard to the destination of man and his own everlasting fortunes, to a particular book sent him through this channel, which he read and read again. Being a sad sufferer for many years, the intercourse that sprang from this incident was largely carried on by letters ; and he always addressed Mr Brown, though much his junior, as his beloved father. My hereditary friend Colonel Vetch gives me to understand that,

consentaneously with this Haddington movement in his father's mind, there came a series of congenial letters upon him from India at this time. They were from a son who had ostensibly gone to serve the Company as a soldier, but really (one would say) to become the disciple, if not the convertite of Bishop Corrie. So strangely are the warp and the woof of that still mysterious Life, which man partly weaves for himself and partly has woven for him, brought together in the counsels of Heaven and on the face of the earth ! Perhaps it should be noticed here that this Robert Vetch had been so intimate, at one period of early youth, with the lad that was blown up at John Croumbie's that it was solely owing to an attack of illness that day that he was not with him in the cellar in the evening ;—such were then the amenities and freedom of life in a country-town. His mother, who had kept him at home whether he would or no, always joined him in avowing this fact.

Yes, the religious or spiritual element was the preponderating principle in the Second Nature of Samuel Brown, during much the greater part of his busy career. To write about him, even to speak of him aright, was to bring religion into view ; nay, it was almost to introduce theology, for he was typical of a considerable class of laymen belonging to his time

and condition. This was doubtless the constraining reason why a writer who knew him well, in attempting to characterise that class, ventured to draw a literal portrait of him under the professed fiction of being his son, the class being psychologically the fathers of the newer generation of thinkers and liver. Dr Chalmers pronounced that portrait, taking it literally, to be true to the life. "It's the very man," said he one morning to a friend of mine. These circumstances and such a verdict seem to warrant its reproduction here,—with the permission of the author.

"Well! you must know," says this writer, unfortunately as quaint as he is out-spoken, "you must know that Christopher Analysis, my reverend father, was essentially a man of faith, but was not aware of it. I would describe him as a thin, dark, yearning man, who worked hard and humbly all his days in the 'service of Christ,' and was sustained under the load of his labours by the incessant pulse of a strong heart of faith, without ever knowing he had such a heart at all :—like an old Hebrew man of God in this respect. There was this essential distinction between the Abrahamic kind of faith and his however : both unconscious, the former was quite unaccompanied by anything like analysis, as we have seen and admired already ;* while the latter was absolutely

* See *Lay Sermon*, No. I.

hidden from its possessor, though not from Him who 'seeth in secret,' by the overgrowth of modern science. Standing before the altar, he loved to pursue the planets in their invisible pathways round the sun ; to track the flowing blood of life, from heart to heart again, through the myriad smooth channels and emunctories of the circulation in his own surpassing frame ; and thence to think that he inferred the existence and attributes of a God, to the great corroboration of the truth of Revelation. I remember how he would lead me away, yet a child, to some expanse of seaside sand, when the tide had ebbed ; draw a three-feet sun with his staff, put on all the planets, satellites, and comets, at their right distances, and of their proportional sizes ; trace their manifold interweaving orbits ; and then, with glistening eye now upturned to the blazing sun on high, and now bent down on the radiated sand at our feet, set them all a-swimming in their appointed courses among the blue ether of Heaven :—and bid me conclude that such stupendous mechanism and exquisite design implied Divinity. Then those big, tortuous, and purpled veins on the back of his aged hand, how many a lesson about the Great Designer did he read from them, blessed characters that they were, as I sat upon his knee, with the clustering group of sisters and brothers about us, when the Sabbath-days came

round ! Our orreries upon the beach were swept away, almost as soon as they were made ; and the substance of the distended blood-vessels, which used to be our diagrams of physiology, has long ago gone down dust to dust, melted away into the common ocean of organic matter, and sprung up anew in, God only knows how many, beautiful forms of life ; but there shall cease to be any unity in my successive days, when I forget those paternal instructions. Heaven forbid it ! for what can we be without simplicity of progress, from year to year, but suicidal rebels against the deepest and widest of the laws of the very world in which we have been appointed to dwell ?

“ The truth is that the beauty and magnificence of the mere external machinery of the universe, and the power of the intellectual instrumentality by which these have been expounded with such signal success in our centuries, lay too heavy on my honoured father’s mind ; and that combined with his immovable faith in Christianity to produce a character, which is very nearly universal among the religious men of the present day in Britain. For example, he thought that he believed the word, and consequently the divinity, of the Christ (or Anointed One), because the man Jesus had given irresistible ‘ evidence,’ in His miracles, of the divinity of His mission ; and that

the proof accumulated to infinitude by the addition of the 'evidence' of prophecy, the 'evidence' of the general fitness of the gospel of peace to the constitution of man, and the like. Accordingly his conception of the mysteries proper, such as the Holy Trinity, was that they resemble the solar system before the rise of Copernicus, Kepler, and Newton ; and that they may all become comprehensible in God's own good time, if not on earth, at least in heaven. I say he thought that such was the foundation of his belief, or rather perhaps that such might be the foundation of a right Christian belief to others ; for after all, this was only his scientific statement of the theorem of Christianity, which is a very different thing, for every man, from the reality of the Christian life. Abraham's religion was that of unconscious faith without any analysis, and necessarily assumed no spoken form ; but could neither be heard nor seen, being his very self. My father's was the product of unconscious faith and conscious analysis, and it has been that of most reflective pious Britons since the philosophy of Locke was infused into our theology."

Were it not beyond the province of the writer to criticise, something might have been put in here without disadvantage. Suffice it that such were the outer man and manners, and that such was also some-

thing of the interior make, of the Haddington philanthropist, as Chalmers called him, during the latter half of his existence. Unmusical, unimaginative, yet genial as music and hospitable as the imagination, not only was the old man's heart (for old he was before his time) open as day to melting charity ; but open were his house and his heart too to all good men, especially if they came from afar, where they had been labouring in the common cause. Many a missionary and minister (of every evangelical denomination and of every grade of distinction) sat at this good man's feasts and slept under his roof-tree, particularly at the local anniversaries corresponding with the May meetings of London ; yet the most memorable (as they were the dearest) social seasons of that low-ceiled, wooden-panelled, capacious old dining-room, were furnished by the occasion of his brothers' happy visits. They were all ministers except David.*

The comings and goings of Ebenezer above all (and that is saying much) were little less than angel-visits. The compass and pathos of his voice were

* This brother was the Benjamin of the family, in virtue of his juniority, as well as his greater beauty of countenance and slenderness of person :—well known in Edinburgh (for but a few years, alas) as a publisher ; and also as editing, and frequently writing with much elegance in the *Christian Gleanner*.

famous and unmatched throughout Scotland in the pulpit ; but its tenderness in the family circle was a new kind of music. "I have heard him speak far above singing." Then the things he spoke were literally always pure, lovely, of good report, holy, and often lofty. One particular Sabbath evening comes to mind with all its petty world of detail. He was supping on rice-milk and a dash of sherry, after a laborious day of prayer and preaching in his father's church. It was in that pulpit he had first opened his mouth, while yet a youth :—"Ay," said his father, "John and I try to preach, but Eben can preach." But there he sat now,—an aged man, wearied with the day's work, his wig laid aside, night-cap donned, knee-buckles undone, and his feet thrust into slippers. He had been in town with some preaching and conference deputation from Scotland or other. (The crowds of Londoners who heard him called him the Blessed Scotchman on this occasion, they say.) Many a sweet incident of his visit he told us. Among other things, he described his experience on the occasion of an evening sermon he had preached before a vast assembly (as it seemed to the minister of the little town of Inverkeithing) in Rowland Hill's chapel ; the reputed ministers and public men he had seen in the ante-room or vestry, the vast chapel itself, the bright lights, the crowding audience, the

text and sermon, his excitement, his self-oblivion, his sitting down solemnised and also exhausted to the last degree—when the pealing organ (which he had quite forgotten) struck up an anthem in the key of his discourse. “And O,” said he in one of his most charming tones, as we listened in silence to his simple story, “And O, I thought I was in heaven !” Both he and his full brother, the minister of Whitburn, excelled in anecdote ; and there is no wonder that their society kindled even their somewhat inarticulate half-brother into story. But he had only a few anecdotes that he could tell with anything like effect. One was his favourite little story : and he told it hundreds of times, to his children and their cousins, and even to his older brothers ; none of whom ever tired of it, for his sake, if not for its own. His mother was the voucher for its authenticity. When alone he would tell it somewhat after this wise, as if even the young one on the knee could always be taken in by the surprise intended for us at the close. “There were once two herd-boys on the same hill-sides in Perthshire. One was good, like Abel ; and the other wicked, like Cain. One evening they had to come down a steep place together, where there was only one narrow bit of roadway ; and this Perthshire Cain had shoes on, but poor Abel had none. ‘Now’s the time for fun,’ thought wicked Cain ;

and he got before, and strewed thorny whins and things before the naked feet of his brother-herd. And what did Abel do? Why, he said, ‘Eh, man! I would no’ do that to you.’ And Abel grew a learned man; and his name was John Brown, and he was my father, and he was your own grandfather, children.” Such was his favourite story about his father, and the fact is an anecdote characteristic of himself; for though he revered his father’s memory to the border of idolatry, and bred his family in an excess of veneration for the same, yet it was always the moral excellences, rather than the intellectual eminence, of the Divine that he dwelt upon. When he told it before grown people, such as Uncle Eben on the Sunday evening just described, he did it with less art; but the glistening of his happy eye was ever the same as he proceeded, saying “Eh, man! I would no’ do that to you.”

IX.

THERE is an aspect under which our Subject has not yet been considered ; but it cannot well be omitted, for it is one which every man presents in these days, and this public-spirited citizen not less than his neighbours. In a so-called constitutional country like this, which thinks itself self-governing (and really is so in some degree) every man has his political opinions, get them how he may. As might easily be inferred from the analytical turn of his intellect and his sanguine character, Mr Brown was all along decidedly liberal (as it has grown customary to say) in his judgment of the political questions of the times. He was what used to be called a stanch reformer, not a radical. Too fond of experiment, too sensitive of fault, and too eager for improvement, to be a conservative in either State or Church, he was on the other hand too timid to make a good republican, friend of the people, radical, or anything of that sort. In short, he was just a kind of whig of the Edinburgh school, from first to last. He had never taken any active part in the management of the affairs of his own burgh, however ; but such was the public esteem in which he was held that,

in that memorable year of 1833, immediately after the passing of the Reform Bill, he was at once elected to the Provostship, without having passed through any of the intermediate offices. The day of election throughout the Scotch burghs was a Friday, the hour noon ; but, owing to the great weekly corn-market being held there soon after noon, the process began at 10 A.M. at Haddington, so that he was actually the first Reform Magistrate of Scotland in point of historic time !

It was undoubtedly a disadvantage not to have served any apprenticeship to civic rule, before his elevation to the highest seat in the council-chamber ; but he had always cherished a settled aversion to the festive and jobbing propensities of the old councils. Like many sincere reformers he did hope that now things would be better ; and having accepted office with hesitation, he conscientiously performed the duties of his new position, accountably to God as well as to man. It will be universally allowed now, that he played his part with much credit to himself, and some little benefit to his constituents. The new Provost immediately economised the funds of the burgh by abolishing many unnecessary expenditures, and attempted the introduction of several improvements, especially in connection with the subject of education ; but, having been met at every turn by strenuous opposition, and having received only a

timid and qualified support from his own party, he carried comparatively few of his designs into execution.

Finding himself foiled at the council-table, he addressed several pamphlets to his townsmen ; and in fact he made a point of annually presenting the constituency with a printed report of their expenditure, accompanied by a statement both of what had been done, and of what had been left undone, during the preceding year,—being of opinion that every burgh has a right to expect such an account at the hands of its magistrates. His first Burgh-report was reprinted in London, as a model on the small scale, by the committee of a society which had been formed about that time by certain apparently influential citizens, for the purpose of effecting City Reform.

If ill-drained Haddington is not supplied with water from the Lang-Cram above the upper mills upon the Tyne, if the Burgh-schools have sunk into undeserved neglect, &c. &c., it is no fault of her first reform-provost ;—although it might possibly be difficult to find and point out the benefits accruing to the dear old town from that grand promissory-note, commonly called the Reform Bill. It were mere idleness to dwell at greater length on the political whereabouts of the ancient burgh, even with the help of Wishart's famous prediction that Babes should rule over her.

Suffice it that, when Sebastopol is taken, she drinks to it ; when a treaty of peace with Russia is signed at Paris, she drinks again ; and then asks Kossuth to deliver a harangue against Rome, Vienna, Petersburg, and London, all round ; but finds, for her example, that the eloquent Magyar can only reverse the witty distich of Coleridge—

“ Many like Fox can game, like Pitt can drink,
But few like Fox can speak, like Pitt can think.”

When Provost Brown retired from the chief magistracy, at the expiry of the ordinary term, he published an address to the townsfolk and electors ; stating clearly the changes his colleagues and he had effected, the proposals for other improvements he had failed to carry, and certain suggestions for future reformation which he begged to leave with the public at large. Nor did he now withdraw from all the occupations he had engaged in while in office. Amongst others, besides remaining in the Council as Dean of Guild, he continued the practice which he had resumed when first elected, namely that of instructing the county prisoners on the Sabbath evenings. It was at one of these jail-meetings, in the succeeding January, that he was seized with Influenza ; which overbore him so rapidly that, by the

end of the following week, he seemed to be once more near his end. Again he was prayed for in public as being at the very close of life. Sunk as he was, however, he did not apprehend such impending danger himself ; and one day he whispered—" I see you all think I am dying, but I am greatly mistaken if I have not still much to suffer." Nor did he shrink from the anticipated endurance of suffering ; for when asked (as anxious Scottish friends will ask) if Christ were precious even then, he fervently responded—" Yes, He has long been so." Yes, Christ and all that was associated, nay, identified with that holy name in his imagination, heart, and conscience, had long been precious :—else it had been no time this to ask such a question.

X.

AGREEABLY to his own impression, he soon gave signs of temporary renewal : but the old chest-affection of his youth had been revived in such a harassing, persevering form as promised only a retarded recovery at the best ; while it threatened the slow extinction of life, on the other hand, by a lengthened and noisome process of disorganisation. He long lay on a weary bed, in a state of extreme helplessness, exhausted by incessant cough, tossed by the fever of irritation. Meanwhile he bowed his head to it all with singular meekness and fortitude ; and he would often quote, with an air which bespoke the satisfying sweetness of the sentiment, a death-bed saying of the venerable Simeon of Cambridge—" All is ordered by infinite wisdom and infinite love, and that's enough for me."

In a few months, however, he was actually able to move about a little ; and in the course of two long years of excessive languor, chequered by the usual fluctuations of amendment and relapse, he really improved to such a degree that, by the autumn of 1838, he had returned to many of his former engagements.

This partial recovery did not last. In the course of November he fell back considerably, and the lost way was never regained. The winter was spent in almost entire confinement to the house ; the consequent inaction of which was, as it had been all along, his severest trial. "A little more strength for a little more work"—was all he prayed for ; it was denied, and he was content. In the mean time his friends, trusting all too fondly to the recollection of his repeated restorations to them in circumstances apparently as desperate, willingly indulged the hope that he would revive with the following spring. These expectations were never realised ; and his malady steadily advanced by almost imperceptible degrees, till it was evident, about April, that the ceaseless irritation which preyed on his enfeebled frame had at last induced a state of hectic fever, that would soon wear him away. He suspected as much himself : and he engaged in setting his house in order with both anxiety and care,—a somewhat complicated duty, which he was enabled to do to a remarkable degree ; although, for some months, he could not write but by dictation.

Patience surely had its perfect work in him ; and the gentle, uncomplaining resignation, with which he bore the load of his accumulated distresses, will never be forgotten by those who were by as he passed

through "the valley and shadow" of this protracted death. Willing himself "to depart and be with Christ," as he expressed it from St Paul, the sanctity of his love to others, and his concern for their earthly as well as their everlasting happiness, shone most sweetly through the shades of the night, that was now quickly closing round him and us : and the radiance of those blessed affections, like the moon and stars of the night of nature, lightened and even beautified the gloom of its approach, sad though the twilight was. A beloved young friend (who eventually passed away to her rest before him) in whom he owned a paternal interest, lay abed at Edinburgh in as hopeless a condition as himself ; and the father-like earnestness with which, calmly biding his own time, he nightly pled at the family-altar for her recovery, was surpassed only by the brief but holy fervour with which, feeling the bonds of life loosen within him, he besought the God of his fathers to make him "the happy father of a happy family in heaven."

His sufferings now drew near an end ; and as the summer advanced, he sank so rapidly that, by the first week of July, he could not be raised from bed. He now felt assured that his liberation was at hand ; and spoke to one member of the family about certain things he wished attended to, if possible, soon after he should be gone ; to another, of the arrangements

of his funeral. Death seemed to have no sting for him, nor could the grave boast of victory over one who met the "king of terror" with such equanimity. *Æquamemento* was the secular, almost sportive lullaby with which his toilworn father amused and soothed the little Prophet of an evening long ago; and now, in the tormented evening of life, he possessed his soul in patience, sustained by a faith as far above the noblest heathen morality, as the peace of God passes all understanding and transcends the Muse.

On the evening of the same day, when reminded that he had often been worse when he had not despaired of life, he said he "now felt everything within breaking up." "I trust, then, that you find Christ to be altogether precious?"—again was urged upon him. Again he of course replied—"I have never experienced the high excitements in religion which some seem to have enjoyed; but I have no fears." After this he fell into a profound lethargy, in which he was sensible only of oppressive exhaustion, disturbed by fits of miserable restlessness and cough.

The next night his family was called to witness his departure. It was whispered in his ear by his wife, May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit! He opened his eyes and said Amen. Looking kindly round on his weeping house-

hold he added these good words, not without the pauses of the dying—"I am sensible of what must be your feelings, but I wish to leave you quietly :—Christ has been precious to live with and precious to live for :—when you come to die, you will find Him to be infinitely precious :—it has long been my earnest desire to train you to His service on earth :—if there be prayer in heaven, I will pray much for you all." He now took an affectionate leave of such of his family as were present, left messages of love for the absent, and then relapsed into the torpor from which the occasion had roused him for a time.

It was not, however, the will of God that he should yet be delivered from the body of this death after all. He longed to be gone. His wish was for a while refused :—but let a veil be drawn over his last days, peaceful (if also full of pain) though they were. Suffice it that, having hung midway between life and death a whole week after he had bidden adieu to time, he expired at last on the morning of the 13th of July, A.D. 1839, in the 61st year of his age.

APPENDIX.

A

(a) THE following extracts from Dr William Brown's Pamphlet, *Memoir Relative to Itinerating Libraries*, will interest founders, especially as showing the honest enthusiasm of the brothers anent the ultimate destination of the Scheme :—

“ I. The primary feature of these libraries is their *itinerating* character. * * * It is well known that stationary libraries in country places very commonly cease, after a few years, to excite much interest,—that the funds rapidly diminish,—that the addition of new books which is made from time to time becomes, in consequence of this, too small to inspire any degree of curiosity,—and that most of the volumes lie undisturbed on the shelves, unread and uncalled for. To persons acquainted with the issues from stationary libraries of a number of years standing, the following statement will appear almost incredible. The issues of new books at Haddington to subscribers, have on an average of the last two years, been nearly eight and a half times per annum for each volume : the

gratuitous issues at Haddington, Gifford, Salton, Aberlady, North Berwick, Belhaven, and Spott have been seven times for each volume ; and issues of the books of the whole establishment (now amounting to upwards of 2000 volumes) have, so far as reported, been five times for each volume,—or 10,000 issues of the whole. * * * Such indeed has been the interest excited by the regular removal of the libraries, and the supply of new divisions, that in several places, during the winter season, the whole of the books have been issued at once ; not a volume has been left in the library.

“ II. A second important feature of these libraries is their *cheapness*. When the object is to supply not a single town or village with a library, but a whole country or a whole kingdom, *cheapness* comes to be a primary *desideratum*. A single library of fifty volumes, with book-case, catalogue, labels, advertisements and issuing-books, may be procured for from £10 to £12 ; but the cost will of course depend in a considerable degree on the kind of books wanted, and whether they have been recently published. Very good divisions may be selected for from £8 to £10. Taking the medium of these rates, namely £10, the following number of libraries might be established for the sum stated :

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|---|-----|
| 1 for a village, | . | . | £10 |
| 5 for a district of villages, | . | . | 50 |
| 50 for a county, | . | . | 500 |

“ Supposing the books in these libraries to be read on an average annually, in the proportion which has just been stated, namely five times for each volume,—this in twenty years, the period which a library is found to last, will amount to 100 issues for every volume, or 5000 issues for the whole of the books in each library : and 250,000 issues for the whole of the books in fifty libraries.

“ III. It is an important characteristic of these Libraries that there is in them a principle of *Self-production*. * * * Originally all the libraries were entirely gratuitous; a small box was merely attached to each library, to afford the readers an opportunity of giving any small donation they might think proper; but some years ago a plan was adopted of keeping *new* books at Haddington for the use of all persons who gave a small annual subscription, to the value of double the amount of their whole contributions, and the plan was extended to North Berwick and Dunbar. This arrangement has been extended with complete success. Previous to the adoption of this measure, the greatest number of annual subscribers did not exceed eight; now they amount to 162. The following statement will show that for several years past they have been regularly on the increase.

| 1821 | 1822 | 1823 | 1824 | 1825 | 1826 | 1827 | 1828 | 1829 |
|---------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <hr/> 8 | <hr/> 64 | <hr/> 61 | <hr/> 54 | <hr/> 99 | <hr/> 110 | <hr/> 135 | <hr/> 145 | <hr/> 162 |

“ In consequence of there being stations for *new* books in three different towns, it has been found practicable to furnish the subscribers with a much greater number of recent publications, by means of a mutual exchange between these places, than would have been practicable had the plan been limited to a single town. By the subscriptions too, the means are in part furnished for providing new books for the following year. In 1829, the subscriptions and donations from these three places, including an Agricultural branch, amounted to £39, 14s. 6d., and the donations from gratuitous readers to £7, 12s. 3d., making in all £47, 6s. 9d.

“ Hitherto the books have been issued gratuitously from the other libraries, but it is proposed in future, now that a spirit of reading has been excited in the county, to issue the books

the first year that a division is in a place, at the rate of a penny a volume; but as a subscription, however small, might essentially impede the success of the scheme, and as it is of immense consequence to bring the books within the reach of the whole population, particularly of the young, whom it is of peculiar importance to form to habits of reading and reflection, they will still continue to be issued gratuitously the second year. By such a system, combined with the plan of lending out the books when new to subscribers of 5s.—each division may, on an average, be expected to produce the sum of 25s. a-year, which, as the number of libraries increases, will prove the fruitful parent of new libraries.

“ If a British and Foreign Itinerating Library Society were established in London, and were able to raise £5000 a-year for the formation of such libraries, they might, within a moderate period of time, cover the whole of Europe with such Institutions, by getting up divisions of fifty volumes each, with book-cases, &c., granting them on loan for 25s. a-year, which many individuals would willingly pay, as they might more than reimburse themselves by lending out the books; or by adopting the plan which has just been suggested, a sum equal to this would in most places be easily raised. To show the importance of this scheme, it may be useful to subjoin a tabular view of the results in the course of fifty years.” *

It is unnecessary to follow the Doctor into this elaborate Tabular View, in case (as he ingenuously suggests for his own part) “ it might be supposed we got into the regions of romance.” The table extends to fifty years, and (the author adds) “ it is scarcely necessary, indeed,

* By the experiment which has been made in East Lothian, it has been found, as already stated, that a library will last about twenty years.

to proceed further. Taking the population of our globe at six hundred millions, we have already, in fifty years, provided libraries for every six hundred of the inhabitants." And then follow other glowing speculations, founded on other premises, and "matter of simple calculation"—so full of life and hope is a new thought while yet young! This extract from p. 12 is calculated to be more useful :—

"If, however, it should be found impracticable to establish a society with an income of £5000 a-year, the plan may be carried on, in consequence of this principle of self-production, in a county or particular district, by a society or an individual who is able to raise, say £50 annually, for this purpose. By the regular application of such a sum yearly to this object, a whole county, or even a still larger district, would, in the course of no long period, be completely covered with libraries. As it may be of consequence to exhibit the working of the plan on a limited scale, with the view of inducing a society or an individual to make the experiment in their own vicinity, we shall subjoin a table exhibiting the results for twenty-five years."

| Years. | Annual Contribution. | Revenue from Libraries. | Total Income. | | | New Libraries Esa- blished. | Total Number of Libraries. |
|--------|-------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|----|----|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | £ | £ s. d. | £ | s. | d. | | |
| 1 | 50 | — | 50 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 5 |
| 2 | 50 | 6 5 0 | 56 | 5 | 0 | 5 | 10 |
| 3 | 50 | 12 10 0 | 62 | 10 | 0 | 6 | 16 |
| 4 | 50 | 20 0 0 | 70 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 23 |
| 5 | 50 | 28 15 0 | 78 | 15 | 0 | 8 | 31 |
| 6 | 50 | 38 15 0 | 88 | 15 | 0 | 9 | 40 |
| 7 | 50 | 50 0 0 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 50 |
| 8 | 50 | 62 10 0 | 112 | 10 | 0 | 11 | 61 |
| 9 | 50 | 76 5 0 | 126 | 5 | 0 | 13 | 74 |
| 10 | 50 | 92 10 0 | 142 | 10 | 0 | 14 | 88 |
| 11 | 50 | 110 0 0 | 160 | 0 | 0 | 16 | 104 |
| 12 | 50 | 130 0 0 | 180 | 0 | 0 | 18 | 122 |
| 13 | 50 | 152 10 0 | 202 | 10 | 0 | 21 | 143 |
| 14 | 50 | 178 15 0 | 228 | 15 | 0 | 22 | 165 |
| 15 | 50 | 206 5 0 | 256 | 5 | 0 | 26 | 191 |
| 16 | 50 | 238 15 0 | 288 | 15 | 0 | 29 | 220 |
| 17 | 50 | 275 0 0 | 325 | 0 | 0 | 32 | 252 |
| 18 | 50 | 315 0 0 | 365 | 0 | 0 | 37 | 289 |
| 19 | 50 | 361 5 0 | 411 | 5 | 0 | 41 | 330 |
| 20 | 50 | 412 10 0 | 462 | 10 | 0 | 46 | 376 |
| 21 | 50 | 470 0 0 | 520 | 0 | 0 | 52 | 423 |
| 22 | 50 | 528 15 0 | 578 | 15 | 0 | 58 | 476 |
| 23 | 50 | 593 15 0 | 643 | 15 | 0 | 65 | 535 |
| 24 | 50 | 666 5 0 | 716 | 5 | 0 | 71 | 599 |
| 25 | 50 | 745 0 0 | 795 | 0 | 0 | 80 | 671 |
| | 1250 | 5771 5 0 | 7021 | 5 | 0 | 702 | |

By means of these 702 libraries, there would be provided, at the end of 25 years, a division of books for every 400 individuals in a population of 280,800.

(b.) The following is extracted from a letter by Mr Hole of the Yorkshire Union of Institutes, dated Central

Committee Rooms, Leeds Mechanics' Institute, July 27, 1852 :—

“ My object in these few observations is to propose a plan which I think precisely attains the object to be aimed at, and that is by means of an itinerating library, under the management and control of the committee of the Yorkshire Union. It may anticipate some of the objections to which all new proposals are subjected, and render my meaning clearer, if I explain that such a plan is in successful operation in Cumberland. Nine villages are there united under the title of the ‘ United Villages Perambulating Library.’ It consists of nearly 300 volumes, and has 400 members, each paying one penny per month. The books are deposited at nine stations, one in each village, under the care of a suitable person, and every six weeks a paid messenger removes the books in boxes provided for that purpose. All the stations are on a footing of perfect equality as to priority in receiving the fresh books. At first it was principally intended to benefit the younger portion of the community, but its success slightly changed this feature.

“ From the Parliamentary Report on Public Libraries,* it appears that the plan of itinerating libraries has prevailed extensively in Scotland. It was introduced into the Highlands by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and into Peeblesshire by the Free Church, owing to the success which had attended it in East Lothian, where the plan has been in operation twenty-five years. It was originated by Mr Samuel Brown, of Haddington. In the latter district there were at one time as many as fifty stations, at each of which fifty volumes were deposited. The whole of the books were issued on an average five times in the course of a year. Some of the

* Evidence of Rev. John Croumbie Brown, p. 111.

books were issued eighteen times, and some as many as thirty times in two years. Very often there was not a single book to be found in the libraries. The evidence as to the benefits conferred by it was very favourable, and the witness stated that the first Mechanics' Institution at Haddington and Dunbar originated out of the interest excited by those libraries. The books were changed only every two years. And one proof of the great importance of the tolerably frequent change of books in such libraries is offered in the fact, that the circulation always fell off in the second year, generally in the proportion of one-third, and rose again with the introduction of new books. Shopkeepers and schoolmasters were found to make the most effective librarians, from the facilities they possessed of giving out the books. It was also stated that the success of the plan mainly depended on the securing of zealous librarians. As the librarians must have been the parties generally best cognisant of the utility of their labours, it is strongly confirmative of the advantages, that no difficulty was found in securing a sufficient number of persons willing to undertake the task without any remuneration, and simply as a means of doing good. Much of the original success of the undertaking seems to have been attributable to the energy of the founder of the plan, the father of the witness. With the withdrawal of his help, the library declined. Another cause is to be found in the fact that no charge was made for the books for the space of fourteen or fifteen years, and those who had the books gratuitously, would, as is usual, consider it a hardship to be called upon to pay. The plan, however, is in successful working in about twenty divisions in the western district of East Lothian, and the witness, after his long and extensive experience in connection with its practical working, is as confident as ever of the good results of the plan, and the practicability of a much greater extension of it."

This from the Report of the Yorkshire Union, &c., for 1855 seems to the purpose (pp. 10, 11) :—

“ The next topic of importance is the Itinerating Village Library. As far as it has yet been in operation, we think we are warranted in anticipating that it will become an important department of the future operations of the Union. The success of the plan, however, depends much more upon the Local Librarians than upon the Central Committee. The Library can scarcely ever retain a place in any village where there is not a person of some energy and personal influence, either as Librarian, or at least taking an active part in its support. All that the Central Committee offer is the loan of books, at the cheapest possible rate, and the benefit of their experience when it is asked for. The rest must be accomplished by the places that receive the books. The Village Library is the adjunct of the exertions of the clergyman, the schoolmaster, and of every person labouring for the moral and intellectual progress of his fellows. We regret to say that during the past year several places have discontinued the Library, where there was a population ample enough to have supported one of twice the extent, and where, too, no Library existed. Other villages have closed their connection with the Village Library on the very satisfactory ground that they have been enabled to establish one of their own. The present number of stations is 24 ; the total number of books is 2100, divided into 42 sections, of which 17 sections are on hand.”

The same Report contains valuable appendices (A, B, C) concerning the Rules and working of the Yorkshire Union and of the Castle Howard Libraries (the latter under the propitious auspices of Lord Carlisle). The Union Report for 1856 contains a still more

satisfactory report of the Village Library by Mr Dixon, the Librarian, as well of the Castle Howard United Villages Itinerating Library, under the fostering care of Ishmael Fish. A company of such men would soon do this or any other good work, for a country or two, not to say a county.

B

As this Memoir, so far as it is biographical, is intended chiefly for relatives, and especially descendants direct and lateral (while it is intended for strangers chiefly in so far as it is taken up with libraries and plans) this extract from the letter of a deceased son, capable of such a judgment, pronouncing on the business habits and work-a-day faculty of his father, will interest those who delight in asking a speculator how he managed his own affairs! The writer was the youngest member yet enrolled in the Manchester Chamber of Commerce.

Manchester, 10th August 1846.

* * * I duly received yours of the 6th current enclosing my father's memoir. You ask me if I ever think of him? Very often. His image is often before me. I daily wonder at his character—uniting so much independence of thought with so little assumption of superiority—so much decision of character with so great a deference to the opinions of others. I

cannot well tell you what I think of him. His self-denial and his indefatigability in the furtherance of what he supposed the welfare of others were very remarkable traits in a disposition so much interested in his own pursuits, and so well gifted by Nature for his own advancement in life. Since I came here I have sometimes in my solitary walks imagined his arrival in Manchester with the world all before him forty-five years ago. With his diligent business-habits and fondness for chemical inquiry he would naturally have taken to calico printing, at which such enormous fortunes have been made. I believe that long ere this he would have been among the richest men in England. His business talents were certainly of a very high order. You know the old letter-book that lies below your desk in the shop. I have often read those letters of his with great interest. They are so clear and decided, with no palaver about them. Every one I have met in life has some humbug about him or her. * * *



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